The Mennonite Quarterly Review

VOLUME XVIII APRIL, 1944 NUMBER TWO

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EDITORIAL

MODERN MENNONITISM IN AMERICA WITHOUT DOUBT CARRIES WITHIN ITS soul much of authentic original Anabaptism, but this authentic Anabaptist heritage is overlaid with the deposits of numerous and varied spiritual influences which have entered into the life of the group during the past four hundred years. Perhaps, in some quarters, even the very essence of that heritage has been transmuted or perverted into something quite different from its original content. Some might say that such a change or modification is not only inevitable but desirable, and should not be opposed. Whether one agrees with this position or not, certainly it is essential to know and understand what original Anabaptism was, but all too often this understanding is hindered by the overlay. "The Anabaptist Vision," which appears in this issue, is an attempt to define the spirit and purposes of the original Anabaptists in the light of the latest research in the hope that a fresh definition may enable a better evaluation and appraisal, not only of sixteenth century Anabaptism but of modern Mennonitism. It is reprinted by permission from *Church History* for March, 1944, since a wider Mennonite readership will be reached by the *Review*.

THE SECOND OF JOHN UMBLE'S ARTICLES ON EXTINCT MENNONITE CHURCHES in Ohio gives the obituary of the church in Wood County. It is much more than an obituary, for it contains not only a mass of interesting personal and genealogical data on the individual families and leaders of this forgotten community, but also an implicit commentary of the rise and fall of Mennonite congregations. The story of Wood County illustrates both the weakness and the strength of pioneer Mennonitism in its colonization and church policies. A group of families could and did establish themselves not only as an economic and social community but also as a religious fellowship, without depending on an elaborate ecclesiastical organization or a professional ministry. But in the crisis of the congregation that followed in later decades, the leadership was inadequate, the church fossilized and died, and the larger body of which it was a part was unable to render effective assistance. This tragic weakness of the church unveiled in this story was all too often repeated.

UNDER THE SECTION "NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS," THE *Review* PRESENTS in this issue a discussion on basic questions in Mennonite historography by two outstanding scholars, both on the board of editors, which it is confident will prove most interesting and stimulating to all students of Anabaptist-Mennonite history. One cannot be altogether certain that the two doctors fully understand each other's basic positions in their mutual critique, but their joint discussion of a difficult fundamental question is a valuable contribution to that continuing self-criticism which is essential to true scholarship.

The Mennonite Quarterly Review

Vol. XVIII No. 2

THE ANABAPTIST VISION[1]

HAROLD S. BENDER

"Judged by the reception it met at the hands of those in power, both in Church and State, equally in Roman Catholic and in Protestant countries, the Anabaptist movement was one of the most tragic in the history of Christianity; but, judged by the principles, which were put into play by the men who bore this reproachful nickname, it must be pronounced one of the most momentous and significant undertakings in man's eventful religious struggle after the truth. It gathered up the gains of earlier movements, it is the spiritual soil out of which all nonconformist sects have sprung, and it is the first plain announcement in modern history of a programme for a new type of Christian society which the modern world, especially in America and England, has been slowly realizing—an absolutely free and independent religious society, and a State in which every man counts as a man, and has his share in shaping both Church and State."

These words of Rufus M. Jones[2] constitute one of the best

[1] Reprinted from *Church History* (March, 1944) XIII, 3-24, with slight revisions.

[2] Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (London, 1909), 369.

Professor Walter Köhler of Heidelberg has recently expressed a similar evaluation, asserting that the historical significance of the Anabaptists "erschöpft sich nicht in dem Duldermut, der Arbeitstreue, dem kulturellen Fleiss . . . . Nein, die Mennoniten dürfen ohne Überhebung einen Platz in der Weltgeschichte beanspruchen als Bahnbrecher der modernen Weltanschauung mit ihrer Glaubens— und Gewissensfreiheit."

characterizations of Anabaptism and its contribution to our modern Christian culture to be found in the English language. They were brave words when they were written thirty-five years ago, but they have been abundantly verified by a generation of Anabaptist research since that time.[3] There can be no question but that the great principles of freedom of conscience, separation of church and state, and voluntarism in religion, so basic in American Protestantism, and so essential to democracy, ultimately are derived from the Anabaptists of the Reformation period, who for the first time clearly enunciated them, and challenged the Christian world to follow them in practice. The line of descent through the centuries since that time may not always be clear, and may have passed through other intermediate movements and groups, but the debt to original Anabaptism is unquestioned.

The sixteenth century reformers understood the Anabaptist position on this point all too well, and deliberately rejected it. The best witness is Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's successor in Zurich, whose active life span covers the first fifty years of the history of the Swiss Anabaptists and who knew them so well that he published two extensive treatises against them in 1531 and 1561. According to Bullinger, the Swiss Brethren taught that:

> One cannot and should not use force to compel anyone to accept the faith, for faith is a free gift of God. It is wrong to compel anyone by force or coercion to embrace the faith, or to put to death anyone for the sake of his erring faith. It is an error that in the church any sword other than that of the divine Word should be used. The secular kingdom should be separated from the church, and no secular ruler should exercise authority in the church. The Lord has commanded simply to preach the Gospel, not to compel anyone by force to accept it. The true church of Christ has the

[3] The results of this research are best found in: *Mennonitisches Lexikon,* edited by Christian Hege and Christian Neff (Frankfurt a. M. and Weierhof [Pfalz] Germany, 1913 ff), now at the letter "N"; Ernst Correll, *Das Schweizerische Täufermennonitentum: Ein Soziologischer Bericht* (Tübingen, 1925); *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* (published at Goshen, Indiana, since 1927); *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* (published at Weierhof [Palatinate] since 1936); R. J. Smithson, *The Anabaptists, Their Contribution to Our Protestant Heritage* (London, 1935); John Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe* (Scottdale, Pa., 1942); C. Henry Smith, *The Story of the Mennonites* (Berne, Indiana, 1941); L. von Muralt, *Glaube und Lehre der Schweizerischen Wiedertäufer in der Reformationszeit* (Zurich, 1938). Cf. also: Wilhelm Pauck "The Historiography of the German Reformation During the Past Twenty Years; IV. Research in the History of the Anabaptists," *Church History* (December, 1940), IX, 335-364; Harold S. Bender, "Recent Progress in Research in Anabaptist History," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (January, 1934), VIII, 3-17. Only three volumes of the great source publication, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer* (Leipzig, 1930, ff), published by the *Verein fur Reformationsgeschichte,* have yet appeared.

characteristic that it suffers and endures persecution but does not inflict persecution upon anyone.[4]

Bullinger reports these ideas, not in commendation but in condemnation urging the need of rigid suppression. He attempts a point by point refutation of the Anabaptist teaching, closing with the assertion that to put to death Anabaptists is a necessary and commendable service.

But great as is the Anabaptist contribution to the development of religious liberty, this concept not only does not exhaust but actually fails to define the true essence of Anabaptism. In the last analysis freedom of religion is a purely formal concept, barren of content; it says nothing about the faith or the way of life of those who advocate it, nor does it reveal their goals or program of action. And Anabaptism had not only clearly defined goals but also an action program of definiteness and power. In fact the more intimately one becomes acquainted with this group the more one becomes conscious of the great vision that shaped their course in history and for which they gladly gave their lives.

Before describing this vision it is well to note its attractiveness to the masses of Christians of the sixteenth century. Sebastian Franck, himself an opponent, wrote in 1531, scarcely seven years after the rise of the movement in Zurich:

> The Anabaptists spread so rapidly that their teaching soon covered the land as it were. They soon gained a large following, and baptized thousands, drawing to themselves many sincere souls who had a zeal for God. . . . They increased so rapidly that the world feared an uprising by them though I have learned that this fear had no justification whatsoever.[5]

In the same year Bullinger wrote that "the people were running after them as though they were living saints."[6] Another contemporary writer asserts that "Anabaptism spread with such speed that there was reason to fear that the majority of the common people would unite with this sect."[7] Zwingli was so frightened by the power of the movement that he complained that the struggle with the Catholic party was "but child's play" compared to the conflict with the Anabaptists.[8]

[4] Quoted in translation by John Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe,* 325, from Bullinger's *Der Wiedertäufferen Ursprung,* etc., Zurich, 1560.

[5] Horsch, 293, from Sebastian Frank's *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtbibel* (Strassburg, 1531).

[6] Heinrich Bullinger, *Von dem unverschampten fräfel . . . der selbsgesandten Widertouffern* (Zurich, 1531), folio, 2v.

[7] F. Roth, *Augsburgs Reformationsgeschichte* (Munich, 1901), I, 230.

[8] Letter of Zwingli to Vadian, May 28, 1525, *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke* ed. Egli, Finsler, Köhler, *et al.* (Leipzig, 1914), VII, 332.

The dreadful severity of the persecution of the Anabaptist movement in the years 1527-1560 not only in Switzerland, South Germany, and Thuringia, but in all the Austrian lands as well as in the Low Countries, testifies to the power of the movement and the desperate haste with which Catholic, Lutheran, and Zwinglian authorities alike strove to throttle it before it should be too late. The notorious decree issued in 1529 by the Diet of Spires (the same Diet which protested the restriction of evangelical liberties) summarily passed the sentence of death upon all Anabaptists, ordering that "every Anabaptist and rebaptized person of either sex should be put to death by fire, sword, or some other way."[9] Repeatedly in subsequent sessions of the imperial diet this decree was reinvoked and intensified; and as late as 1551 the Diet of Augsburg issued a decree ordering that judges and jurors who had scruples against pronouncing the death sentence on Anabaptists be removed from office and punished by heavy fines and imprisonment.

The authorities had great difficulty in executing their program of suppression, for they soon discovered that the Anabaptists feared neither torture nor death, and gladly sealed their faith with their blood. In fact the joyful testimony of the Anabaptist martyrs was a great stimulus to new recruits, for it stirred the imagination of the populace as nothing else could have done.

Finding therefore that the customary method of individual trials and sentences was proving totally inadequate to stem the tide, the authorities resorted to the desperate expedient of sending out through the land companies of armed executioners and mounted soldiers to hunt down the Anabaptists and kill them on the spot singly or *en masse* without trial or sentence. The most atrocious application of this policy was made in Swabia where the original four hundred special police of 1528 sent against the Anabaptists proved too small a force and had to be increased to one thousand. An imperial provost-marshal, Berthold Aichele, served as chief administrator of this bloody program in Swabia and other regions until he finally broke down in terror and dismay, and after an execu-

[9] The full official text of the decree may be found in *Aller des Heiligen Roemischen Reichs gehaltene Reichstage, Abschiede und Satzungen* (Mainz, 1666), 210, 211. It is also edited by Ludwig Keller in *Monatshefte der Comenius Gesellschaft* (Berlin, 1900), IX, 55-57 and by Bossert in "Die Reichsgesetze über die Wiedertäufer" in *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer, I. Band Herzogtum Wurttemberg* (Leipzig 1930), 1*-10*. See the excellent discussion of Anabaptist persecution by John Horsch in "The Persecution of the Evangelical Anabaptists, "*Mennonite Quarterly Review* (January, 1938), XII, 3-26.

tion at Brixen lifted his hands to heaven and swore a solemn oath never again to put to death an Anabaptist, which vow he kept.[10] The Count of Alzey in the Palatinate, after three hundred and fifty Anabaptists had been executed there, was heard to exclaim, "What shall I do, the more I kill, the greater becomes their number!"

The extensive persecution and martyrdom of the Anabaptists testify not only of the great extent of the movement but also of the power of the vision that burned within them. This is most effectively presented in a moving account written in 1542 and taken from the ancient Hutterian chronicle where it is found at the close of a report of 2,173 brethren and sisters who gave their lives for their faith.[11]

No human being was able to take away out of their hearts what they had experienced, such zealous lovers of God were they. The fire of God burned within them. They would die the bitterest death, yea they would die ten deaths rather than forsake the divine truth which they had espoused. . . .

They had drunk of the waters which had flowed from God's sanctuary, yea, the water of life. They realized that God helped them to bear the cross and to overcome the bitterness of death. The fire of God burned within them. Their tent they had pitched not here upon earth, but in eternity, and of their faith they had a foundation and assurance. Their faith blossomed as a lily, their loyalty as a rose, their piety and sincerity as the flower of the garden of God. The angel of the Lord battled for them that they could not be deprived of the helmet of salvation. Therefore they bore all torture and agony without fear. The things of this world they counted in their holy mind only as shadows, having the assurance of greater things. They were so drawn unto God that they knew nothing, sought nothing, desired nothing, loved nothing but God alone. Therefore they had more patience in their suffering than their enemies in tormenting them.

. . . The persecutors thought they could dampen and extinguish the fire of God. But the prisoners sang in their prisons and rejoiced so that the enemies outside became much more fearful than the prisoners and did not know what to do with them. . . .

Many were talked to in wonderful ways, often day and night. They were argued with, with great cunning and cleverness, with many sweet and smooth words, by monks and priests, by doctors of theology, with much false testimony, with threats and scolding and mockery, yea, with lies and grievous slander against the brotherhood, but none of these things moved them or made them falter.

10 *Geschicht-Buch der Hutterischen Brüder,* edited by Rudolf Wolkan (Macleod [Alberta] and Vienna, 1923) 142, 181.

11 *Ibid.,* 182-187. The following quotation is composed of extracts selected from this account without regard to the original order, chiefly from 186-7.

From the shedding of such innocent blood arose Christians everywhere, brothers all, for all this persecution did not take place without fruit. . . .

Perhaps this interpretation of the Anabaptist spirit should be discounted as too glowing, coming as it does from the group itself, but certainly it is nearer to the truth than the typical harsh nineteenth century interpretation of the movement which is well represented by the opening sentence of *Ursula,* the notable historical novel on the Anabaptists published in 1878 by the Swiss Gottfried Keller, next to Goethe perhaps the greatest of all writers in the German language:

Times of religious change are like times when the mountains open up; for then not only do all the marvelous creatures of the human spirit come forth, the great golden dragons, magic beings and crystal spirits, but there also come to light all the hateful vermin of humanity, the host of rats and mice and pestiferous creation, and so it was at the time of the Reformation in the northeast part of Switzerland.[12]

Before defining the Anabaptist vision, it is essential to state clearly who is meant by the term "Anabaptist," since the name has come to be used in modern historiography to cover a wide variety of Reformation groups, sometimes thought of as the whole "left wing of the Reformation" (Roland Bainton), "the Bolsheviks of the Reformation" (Preserved Smith). Although the definitive history of Anabaptism has not yet been written, we know enough today to draw a clear line of demarcation between original evangelical and constructive Anabaptism on the one hand, which was born in the bosom of Zwinglianism in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525, and established in the Low Countries in 1533, and the various mystical, spiritualistic, revolutionary, or even antinomian related and unrelated groups on the other hand, which came and went like the flowers of the field in those days of the great renovation. The former, Anabaptism proper, maintained an unbroken course in Switzerland, South Germany, Austria, and Holland throughout the sixteenth century, and has continued until the present day in the Mennonite movement, now almost 500,000 baptized members strong in Europe and America.[13] There is no longer any excuse

[12] *Gottfried Keller's Werke,* ed. by Max Nussberger (Leipzig, n. d.), VI, 309. See Elizabeth Horsch Bender, "The Portrayal of the Swiss Anabaptists in Gottfried Keller's Ursula," *Mennonite Quarterly Review,* July, 1943, XVII, 136-150.

[13] In Switzerland, this group was called "Swiss Brethren," in Austria "Hutterites," in Holland and North Germany, "Menists." All these groups seriously objected to the

for permitting our understanding of the distinct character of this genuine Anabaptism to be obscured by Thomas Müntzer and the Peasants War, the Münsterites, or any other aberration of Protestantism in the sixteenth century.

There may be some excuse, however, for a failure on the part of the uninformed student to see clearly what the Anabaptist vision was, because of the varying interpretations placed upon the movement even by those who mean to appreciate and approve it. There are, for instance, the socialist writers, led by Kautsky, who would make Anabaptism either "the forerunner of the modern socialism" or the "culminating effort of medieval communism," and who in reality see it only as the external religious shell of a class movement.[14] There are the sociologists with their partial socio-economic determinism as reflected in Richard Niebuhr's approach to the social origin of religious denominations. There is Albert Ritschl, who sees in Anabaptism an ascetic semi-monastic continuation of the medieval Franciscan tertiaries, and locates the seventeenth century Pietists in the same line;[15] and Ludwig Keller who finds Anabaptists throughout the pre-Reformation period in the guise of Waldenses and other similar groups whom he chooses to call 'the old-evangelical brotherhoods,"[16] and for whom he posits a continuity from earliest times. Related to Keller are the earlier Baptist historians (and certain Mennonites) who rejoice to find in the Anabaptists the missing link which keeps them in the apostolic succession of the true church back through the Waldenses, Bogomiles, Cathari, Paulicians, and Donatists, to Pentecost. More recently there is Rufus M. Jones who is inclined to class the Anabaptists with the mystics, and Walter Koehler who finds an Erasmian humanist origin for them.

However, there is another line of interpretation, now almost

name "Anabaptists" which was a term used to designate a punishable heresy and which after the tragic Münster episode (1534-35) was a name of odious opprobrium. I use the term here only for custom's sake. The term "Mennonite" came into wider use in the seventeenth century and was ultimately applied to all the groups except the Hutterites.

[14] Ernst H. Correll, *Das Schweizerische Täufermennonitentum* (Tübingen, 1925), "Allgemeine historisch-soziologische Kennzeichnung," 3-10, gives an excellent concise survey. See particularly 6, footnote 1. See also Karl Kautsky, *Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation* (1897). Troeltsch rejected the theory of the socio-economic origin of the Anabaptists.

[15] Albrecht Ritschl, *Geshicht des Pietismus* (Bonn, 1880). Cf. R. Friedmann, "Conception of the Anabaptists," *Church History* (December, 1940), IX, 351.

[16] Ludwig Keller, *Die Reformation und die älteren Reformparteien* (Leipzig, 1885). Cf. also Friedmann, *op. cit.*, 352.

a hundred years old, which is being increasingly accepted and which is probably destined to dominate the field. It is the one which holds that Anabaptism is the culmination of the Reformation, the fulfilment of the original vision of Luther and Zwingli, and thus makes it a consistent evangelical Protestantism seeking to recreate without compromise the original New Testament church, the vision of Christ and the Apostles. This line of interpretation begins in 1848 with Max Göbel's great *Geschichte des christlichen Lebens in der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Kirche,* continues with the epoch-making work of C. A. Cornelius, particularly in his *Geschichte des Münsterschen Aufruhrs* (1855-1860), follows in the work of men like Johann Loserth, Karl Rembert, and John Horsch, and is represented by such contemporaries as Ernst Correll of Washington and Fritz Blanke of Zurich. A quotation from Göbel may serve to illustrate this interpretation:

> The essential and distinguishing characteristic of this church is its great emphasis upon the actual personal conversion and regeneration of every Christian through the Holy Spirit. . . . They aimed with special emphasis at carrying out and realizing the Christian doctrine and faith in the heart and life of every Christian in the whole Christian church. Their aim was the bringing together of all the true believers out of the great degenerated national churches into a true Christian church. That which the Reformation was originally intended to accomplish they aimed to bring into full immediate realization.[17]

And Johann Loserth says:

> More radically than any other party for church reformation the Anabaptists strove to follow the footsteps of the church of the first century and to renew unadulterated original Christianity.[18]

The evidence in support of this interpretation is overwhelming, and can be taken from the statements of the contemporary opponents of the Anabaptists as well as from the Anabaptists themselves. Conrad Grebel, the founder of the Swiss Brethren movement, states clearly this point of view in his letter to Thomas

[17] Max Göbel, *Geschichte des Christlichen Lebens,* etc. (Coblentz, 1848), I, 134. Ritschl, *op cit.,* 22, characterizes Göbel's views as follows: "Die Wiedertäuferei also soll nach Göbel die gründlichere, entschiedenere, vollständigere Reformation sein, welche als 'Kind der Reformation' Luthers und Zwinglis zu erkennen aber von Luther seit 1522, von Zwingli seit 1524 aufgegeben worden wäre." Ritschl (*op. cit.,* 7) himself states the Anabaptist position as follows: "Nicht minder haben die Wiedertäufer sich dafür angesehen, dass sie das von Luther und Zwingli begonnene Werk der Wiederherstellung der Kirche zu seinem rechten Ziel führten."

[18] Horsch, *op cit.,* 289.

Müntzer of 1524, in words written on behalf of the entire group which constitute in effect the original Anabaptist pronunciamento:

Just as our forebears [the Roman Catholic Papal Church] fell away from the true God and the knowledge of Jesus Christ and of the right faith in him, and from the one true, common divine word, from the divine institutions, from Christian love and life, and lived without God's law and gospel in human, useless, un-Christian customs and ceremonies, and expected to attain salvation therein, yet fell far short of it, as the evangelical preachers [Luther, Zwingli, etc.] have declared, and to some extent are still declaring; so today, too, every man wants to be saved by superficial faith, without fruits of faith, without the baptism of test and probation, without love and hope, without right Christian practices, and wants to persist in all the old fashion of personal vices, and in the common ritualistic and anti-Christian customs of baptism and of the Lord's Supper, in disrespect for the divine word and in respect for the word of the pope and of the anti-papal preachers, which yet is not equal to the divine word nor in harmony with it. In respecting persons and in manifold seduction there is grosser and more pernicious error now than ever has been since the beginning of the world. In the same error we, too, lingered as long as we heard and read only the evangelical preachers who are to blame for all this, in punishment for our sins. But after we took the Scriptures in hand, too, and consulted it on many points, we have been instructed somewhat and have discovered the great and hurtful error of the shepherds, of ours too, namely that we do not daily beseech God earnestly with constant groanings to be brought out of this destruction of all godly life and out of human abominations, and to attain to true faith and divine instruction.[19]

A similar statement was made in 1538, after fourteen years of persecution, by an Anabaptist leader who spoke on behalf of his group in the great colloquy at Berne with the leaders of the Reformed Church:

While yet in the national church, we obtained much instruction from the writings of Luther, Zwingli, and others, concerning the mass and other papal ceremonies, that they are vain. Yet we recognized a great lack as regards repentance, conversion, and the true Christan life. Upon these things my mind was bent. I waited and hoped for a year or two, since the minister had much to say of amendment of life, of giving to the poor, loving one another, and abstaining from evil. But I could not close my eyes to the fact that the doctrine which was preached and which was based on the Word of God, was not carried out. No beginning was made toward true Christian living, and there was no unison in the teaching concerning the things that were necessary. And although the mass and the images were finally abolished, true repentance and Christian love were not in evidence. Changes were made only as concerned external things.

[19] Letter of Conrad Grebel to Thomas Müntzer, Sept. 5, 1524, *Thomas Müntzers Briefwechsel*, ed. H. Böhmer and P. Kirn (Leipzig, 1931), 92; English translation, Walter Rauschenbusch, "The Zurich Anabaptists and Thomas Münzer," *American Journal of Theology* (January, 1905), IX, 92.

This gave me occasion to inquire further into these matters. Then God sent His messengers, Conrad Grebel and others, with whom I conferred about the fundamental teachings of the apostles and the Christian life and practice. I found them men who had surrendered themselves to the doctrine of Christ by "Bussfertigkeit" [repentance evidenced by fruits]. With their assistance we established a congregation in which repentance was in evidence by newness of life in Christ.[20]

It is evident from these statements that the Anabaptists were concerned most of all about "a true Christian life," that is, a life patterned after the teaching and example of Christ. The reformers, they believed, whatever their profession may have been, did not secure among the people true repentance, regeneration, and Christian living as a result of their preaching. The Reformation emphasis on faith was good but inadequate, for without newness of life, they held, faith is hypocritical.

This Anabaptist critique of the Reformation was a sharp one, but it was not unfair. There is abundant evidence that although the original goal sought by Luther and Zwingli was "an earnest Christianity" for all, the actual outcome was far less, for the level of Christian living among the Protestant population was frequently lower than it had been before under Catholicism. Luther himself was keenly conscious of the deficiency. In April, 1522, he expressed the hope that, "We who at the present are well nigh heathen under a Christian name, may yet organize a Christian assembly."[21] In December, 1525, he had an important conversation with Caspar Schwenckfeld, concerning the establishment of the New Testament church. Schwenckfeld pointed out that the establishment of the new church had failed to result in spiritual and moral betterment of the people, a fact which Luther admitted, for Schwenckfeld states that "Luther regretted very much that no amendment of life was in evidence."[22] Between 1522 and 1527 Luther repeatedly mentioned his concern to establish a true Christian church, and his desire to provide for

[20] Taken from an unpublished manuscript in the *Staatsarchiv des Kantons Bern, (Unnütze Papiere, Bd.* 80), entitled *Acta des Gesprächs zwüschenn predicannten und Touffbrüderenn* (1538). Copy in the Goshen College Library.

[21] Karl Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* (2nd and 3rd ed.) (Tübingen, 1923), 359.

[22] *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* (Leipzig, 1911), II, 280f. See also K. Ecke, *Schwenckfeld, Luther und der Gedanke einer apostolischen Reformation* (Berlin, 1911), 101f. See also the discussion on this topic in J. Horsch, "The Rise of State Church Protestantism," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (July, 1932), VI, 189-191.

earnest Christians *("Die mit Ernst Christen sein wollen")* who would confess the gospel with their lives as well as with their tongues. He thought of entering the names of these "earnest Christians" in a special book and having them meet separately from the mass of nominal Christians, but concluding that he would not have sufficient of such people, he dropped the plan.[22a] Zwingli faced the same problem; he was in fact specifically challenged by the Swiss Brethren to set up such a church; but he refused and followed Luther's course.[23] Both reformers decided that it was better to include the masses within the fold of the church than to form a fellowship of true Christians only. Both certainly expected the preaching of the Word and the ministration of the sacraments to bear fruit in an earnest Christian life, at least among some, but they reckoned with a permanently large and indifferent mass. In taking this course, said the Anabaptists, the reformers surrendered their original purpose, and abandoned the divine intention. Others may say that they were wise and statesmanlike leaders.[24]

The Anabaptists, however, retained the original vision of Luther and Zwingli, enlarged it, gave it body and form, and set out to achieve it in actual experience. They proceeded to organize a church composed solely of earnest Christians, and actually found the people for it. They did not believe in any case that the size of the response should determine whether or not the truth of God should be applied, and they refused to compromise. They

[22a] See Luther's *Deutsche Messe,* translated in *Works of Martin Luther* (ed. C. M. Jacobs et. al.) Vol. vi., Philadelphia (1932) 172, 173.

[23] "Drei Zeugenaussagen Zwinglis im Täuferprozess" in *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1927), IV, 169.

[24] Against this interpretation of Luther (and Zwingli) it may be argued that Luther never completely and consistently adopted the concept of a church of "earnest Christians only" which is here attributed to him, but that along with it he also retained the contradictory concept of the church functioning as a "corpus regens," that is, as an institution of social control. It may be agreed that Luther held the two concepts for a time and that he finally abandoned the former in favor of the latter, but the fact nevertheless remains that the former was for a time dominant, and that it is the implicit meaning of his whole basic theological position. The retention and eventual dominance of the second concept is an evidence of the carry-over of medievalism in Luther's thought. In regard to Zwingli, Wilhelm Hadorn says: "It must be admitted that not only Zwingli but also other Swiss and South German Reformers, e. g., Oecolampad and Capito, originally held views similar to the Anabaptists" (*Die Reformation in der Deutschen Schweiz,* [Leipzig, 1928], 104). Walter Köhler, the best living authoritiy on Zwingli, says: "Es ist, wie bei Luther auch, die Kapitulation der autonomen kirchgemeinschaft vor der Obrigkeit eingetreten." (*Zwinglis Werke* [Leipzig, 1927], IV, 29).

preferred to make a radical break with the fifteen hundred years of history and culture if necessary rather than to break with the New Testament.

May it not be said that the decision of Luther and Zwingli to surrender their original vision was the tragic turning point of the Reformation? Professor Karl Mueller, one of the keenest and fairest interpreters of the Reformation, evidently thinks so, for he says, "The aggressive, conquering power, which Lutheranism manifested in its first period was lost everywhere at the moment when the governments took matters in hand and established the Lutheran Creed,"[25] that is to say, when Luther's mass church concept was put into practice. Luther in his later years expressed disappointment at the final outcome of the Reformation, stating that the people had become more and more indifferent toward religion and the moral outlook was more deplorable than ever. His last years were embittered by the consciousness of partial failure, and his expressions of dejection are well known. Contrast this sense of defeat at the end of Luther's outwardly successful career with the sense of victory in the hearts of the Anabaptist martyrs who laid down their lives in what the world would call defeat, conscious of having kept faith with their vision to the end.

Having defined genuine Anabaptism in its Reformation setting, we are ready to examine its central teachings. The Anabaptist vision included three major points of emphasis; first, a new conception of the essence of Christianity as discipleship, second, a new conception of the church as a brotherhood; and third, a new ethic of love and nonresistance. We turn now to an exposition of these points.

First and fundamental in the Anabaptist vision was the conception of the essence of Christianity as discipleship. It was a concept which meant the transformation of the entire way of life of the individual believer and of society so that it should be fashioned after the teachings and example of Christ.[26] The Anabaptists could not

[25] Karl Müller, *Kirchengeschichte,* II, 1, 476. Müller describes the essential goal of the Anabaptists as follows: "Es bedeutete inmitten der Auflösung aller Verhältnisse genug, dass hier eine Gemeinschaft stand, die die Heiligung des Lebens allem anderen voranstellte und zugleich in den unteren Volksschichten wirklich Fuss gefasst, sie mit selbständiger Religiösität gefüllt hat." (*Kirchengeschichte,* II, 1, 330.)

[26] Johannes Kühn, *Toleranz und Offenbarung* (Leipzig, 1923), 224 says: "With the Anabaptists everything was based on a central idea. This central idea was concretely religious. It was Jesus' command to follow Him in a holy life of fellowship." Professor Alfred Hegler of Tübingen describes the Anabaptist ideal as "liberty of

understand a Christianity which made regeneration, holiness, and love primarily a matter of intellect, of doctrinal belief, or of subjective "experience," rather than one of the transformation of life. They demanded an outward expression of the inner experience. Repentance must be "evidenced" by newness of behaviour. "In evidence" is the keynote which rings through the testimonies and challenges of the early Swiss Brethren when they are called to give an account of themselves. The whole life was to be brought literally under the Lordship of Christ in a covenant of discipleship, a covenant which the Anabaptist writers delighted to emphasize.[27] The focus of the Christian life was to be not so much the inward experience of the grace of God, as it was for Luther, but the outward application of that grace to all human conduct and the consequent Christianization of all human relationships. The true test of the Christian, they held, is discipleship. The great word of the Anabaptists was not "faith" as it was with the reformers, but "following" *(Nachfolge Christi)*. And baptism, the greatest of the Christian symbols, was accordingly to be for them the "covenant of a good conscience toward God" (I Peter 3:21),[28] the pledge of a complete commitment to obey Christ, and not primarily the symbol of a past experience. The Anabaptists had faith, indeed, but they used it to produce a life. Theology was for them a means, not an end.

That the Anabaptists not only proclaimed the ideal of full Christian discipleship but achieved, in the eyes of their contemporaries and even of their opponents, a measurably higher level of performance than the average, is fully witnessed by the sources. The early Swiss and South German reformers were keenly aware of this achievement and its attractive power. Zwingli knew it best of all, but Bullinger, Capito, Vadian, and many others confirm his judgment that the Anabaptist Brethren were unusually sincere, devoted,

conscience, rejection of all state-made Christianity, the demand for personal holiness, and a vital personal acceptance of Christian truth." Professor Paul Wernle says, "Their vital characteristic was the earnestness with which they undertook the practical fulfilment of New Testament requirements both for the individual and for the church." These and other similar quotations are to be found in Horsch, "The Character of the Evangelical Anabaptists as reported by Contemporary Reformation Writers." *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (July, 1934), VIII, 135.

[27] Pilgrim Marpeck, the outstanding writer of the Swiss and South German Brethren, is an example. See J. C. Wenger, "The Theology of Pilgrim Marpeck," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (October, 1938), XII, 247.

[28] The German (Luther) translation of I Peter 3:21 calls baptism "Der Bund eines guten Gewissens mit Gott."

and effective Christians. However, since the Brethren refused to accept the state church system which the reformers were building, and in addition made "radical" demands which might have changed the entire social order, the leaders of the Reformation were completely baffled in their understanding of the movement, and professed to believe that the Anabaptists were hypocrites of the darkest dye. Bullinger, for instance, calls them "devilish enemies and destroyers of the Church of God."[29] Nevertheless they had to admit the apparent superiority of their life. In Zwingli's last book against the Swiss Brethren (1527), for instance, the following is found:

> If you investigate their life and conduct, it seems at first contact irreproachable, pious, unassuming, attractive, yea, above this world. Even those who are inclined to be critical will say that their lives are excellent.[30]

Bullinger, himself, who wrote bitter diatribes against them, was compelled to admit of the early Swiss Brethren that

> Those who unite with them will by their ministers be received into their church by rebaptism and repentance and newness of life. They henceforth lead their lives under a semblance of a quite spiritual conduct. They denounce covetousness, pride, profanity, the lewd conversation and immortality of the world, drinking and gluttony. In short, their hypocrisy is great and manifold.[31]

Bullinger's lament (1531) that "the people are running after them as though they were the living saints" has been reported earlier. Vadian, the reformer of St. Gall, testified, that "none were more favorably inclined toward Anabaptism and more easily entangled with it than those who were of pious and honorable disposition."[32] Capito, the reformer of Strassburg, wrote in 1527 concerning the Swiss Brethren:

> I frankly confess that in most [Anabaptists] there is in evidence piety and consecration and indeed a zeal which is beyond any suspicion of insincerity. For what earthly advantage could they hope to win by enduring exile, torture, and unspeakable punishment of the flesh. I testify before God that I cannot say that on account of a lack of wisdom they are somewhat indifferent toward earthly things, but rather from divine motives.[33]

[29] Bullinger, *Von dem unverschampten fräfel* (1531), fol. 75r.

[30] S. M. Jackson, *Selected Works of Huldreich Zwingli* (Philadelphia, 1901), 127.

[31] Bullinger, *Der Widertäufferen Ursprung,* fol. 15v.

[32] Joachim von Watt, *Deutsche Historische Schriften,* ed. Ernst Götzinger, (St. Gall, 1879), II, 408.

[33] C. A. Cornelius, *Geschichte des Münsterschen Aufruhrs* (Leipzig, 1860), II, 52.

The preachers of the Canton of Berne admitted in a letter to the Council of Berne in 1532 that

> The Anabaptists have the semblance of outward piety to a far greater degree than we and all the churches which unitedly with us confess Christ, and they avoid offensive sins which are very common among us.[34]

Walter Klarer, the Reformed chronicler of Appenzell, Switzerland wrote:

> Most of the Anabaptists are people who at first had been the best with us in promulgating the word of God.[35]

And the Roman Catholic theologian, Franz Agricola, in his book of 1582, *Against the Terrible Errors of the Anabaptists,* says:

> Among the existing heretical sects there is none which in appearance leads a more modest or pious life than the Anabaptist. As concerns their outward public life they are irreproachable. No lying, deception, swearing, strife, harsh language, no intemperate eating and drinking, no outward personal display, is found among them, but humility, patience, uprightness, neatness, honesty, temperance, straightforwardness, in such measure that one would suppose that they have the Holy Spirit of God.[36]

A mandate against the Swiss Brethren published in 1585 by the Council of Berne states that offensive sins and vices were common among the preachers and the membership of the Reformed Church, adding, "And this is the greatest reason that many pious, God-fearing people who seek Christ from their heart are offended and forsake our church [to unite with the Brethren]."[37]

One of the finest contemporary characterizations of the Anabaptists is that given in 1531 by Sebastian Franck, an objective and sympathetic witness, though an opponent of the Anabaptists, who wrote as follows:

> The Anabaptists . . . soon gained a large following, . . . drawing many sincere souls who had a zeal for God, for they taught nothing but love, faith, and the cross. They showed themselves humble, patient under much suffering; they brake bread with one another as an evidence of unity and love. They helped each other faithfully, and called each other brothers. . . . They died as martyrs, patiently and humbly enduring all persecution.[38]

[34] W. J. McGlothlin, *Die Berner Täufer bis 1532* (Berlin, 1902), 36.

[35] J. J. Simler, *Sammlung alter und neuer Urkunden* (Zurich, 1757), I 824.

[36] Karl Rembert, *Die Wiedertäufer im Herzogtum Jülich* (Berlin 1899), 564.

[37] Ernst Müller, *Geschichte der Bernischen Täufer* (Frauenfeld, 1895), 88. Müller speaks (p. 89) of the mandate of 1585 as conceiving of "das Täuferwesen" as a just judgment of God on the church and the people of Berne.

[38] Sebastian Franck, *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtbibel* (Strassburg, 1531), folio 444v.

A further confirmation of the above evaluation of the achievement of the Anabaptists is found in the fact that in many places those who lived a consistent Christian life were in danger of falling under the suspicion of being guilty of Anabaptist heresy. Caspar Schwenckfeld, for instance, declared, "I am being maligned, by both preachers and others, with the charge of being an Anabaptist, even as all others who lead a true, pious Christian life are now almost everywhere given this name."[39] Bullinger himself complained that

> . . .there are those who in reality are not Anabaptists but have a pronounced averseness to the sensuality and frivolity of the world and therefore reprove sin and vice and are consequently called or misnamed Anabaptists by petulant persons.[40]

The great collection of Anabaptist source materials, commonly called the *Täufer-Akten,* now in its third volume, contains a number of specific illustrations of this. In 1562 a certain Caspar Zacher of Waiblingen in Württemberg was accused of being an Anabaptist, but the court record reports that since he was an envious man who could not get along with others, and who often started quarrels, as well as being guilty of swearing and cursing and carrying a weapon, he was not considered to be an Anabaptist.[41] On the other hand, in 1570 a certain Hans Jäger of Vöhringen in Württemberg was brought before the court on suspicion of being an Anabaptist primarily because he did not curse but lived an irreproachable life.[42]

As a second major element in the Anabaptist vision, a new concept of the church was created by the central principle of newness of life and applied Christianity. Voluntary church membership based upon true conversion and involving a commitment to holy living and discipleship was the absolutely essential heart of this concept. This vision stands in sharp contrast to the church concept of the reformers who retained the medieval idea of a mass church with membership of the entire population from birth to the grave compulsory by law and force.

It is from the standpoint of this new conception of the church that the Anabaptist opposition to infant baptism must be inter-

[39] Schwenckfeld's *Epistolar* (1564), I, 203.

[40] Bullinger, *Der Widertäufferen Ursprung* (1561), fol. 170r.

[41] *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer, I. Band Herzogtum Württemberg,* ed. Gustav Bossert (Leipzig, 1930) 216f.

[42] *Ibid.,* 259ff.

preted. Infant baptism was not the cause of their disavowal of the state church; it was only a symbol of the cause. How could infants give a commitment based upon a knowledge of what true Christianity means? They might conceivably passively experience the grace of God (though Anabaptists would question this), but they could not respond in pledging their lives to Christ. Such infant baptism would not only be meaningless, but would in fact become a serious obstacle to a true understanding of the nature of Christianity and membership in the church. Only adult baptism could signify an intelligent life commitment.

An inevitable corollary of the concept of the church as a body of committed and practicing Christians pledged to the highest standard of New Testament living was the insistence on the separation of the church from the world, that is nonconformity of the Christian to the worldly way of life. The world would not tolerate the practice of true Christian principles in society, and the church could not tolerate the practice of worldly ways among its membership. Hence, the only way out was separation *("Absonderung")*, the gathering of true Christians into their own Christian society where Christ's way could and would be practiced. On this principle of separation Menno Simons says:

> All the evangelical scriptures teach us that the church of Christ was and is, in doctrine, life, and worship, a people separated from the world.[43]

In the great debate of 1528 at Zofingen, spokesmen of the Swiss Brethren said:

> The true church is separated from the world and is conformed to the nature of Christ. If a church is yet at one with the world we cannot recognize it as a true church.[44]

In a sense, this principle of nonconformity to the world is merely a negative expression of the positive requirement of discipleship, but it goes further in the sense that it represents a judgment on the contemporary social order, which the Anabaptists called "the world," as non-Christian, and sets up a line of demarcation between the Christian community and worldly society.

A logical outcome of the concept of nonconformity to the world was the concept of the suffering church. Conflict with the world was inevitable for those who endeavored to live an earnest Christian life.

[43] *Complete Works of Menno Simons* (Elkhart, Indiana, 1871), II, 37b.

[44] *Handlung oder Acta der Disputation gehalten zu Zofingen* (Zurich, 1532). fol. 22v.

The Anabaptists expected opposition; they took literally the words of Jesus when he said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," but they also took literally his words of encouragement, "But be ye of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Conrad Grebel said in 1524:

> True Christian believers are sheep among wolves, sheep for the slaughter; they must be baptized in anguish and affliction, tribulation, persecution, suffering, and death; they must be tried with fire and must reap the fatherland of eternal rest not by killing their bodily, but by mortifying their spiritual, enemies.[45]

Professor Ernest Staehelin of Basel, Switzerland, says:

> Anabaptism by its earnest determination to follow in life and practice the primitive Christian church has kept alive the conviction that he who is in Christ is a new creature and that those who are identified with his cause will necessarily encounter the opposition of the world.[46]

Perhaps it was persecution that made the Anabaptists so acutely aware of the conflict between the church and the world, but this persecution was due to the fact that they refused to accept what they considered the sub-Christian way of life practiced in European Christendom. They could have avoided the persecution had they but conformed, or they could have suspended the practice of their faith to a more convenient time and sailed under false colors as did David Joris, but they chose with dauntless courage and simple honesty to live their faith, to defy the existing world order, and to suffer the consequences.

Basic to the Anabaptist vision of the church was the insistence on the practice of true brotherhood and love among the members of the church.[47] This principle was understood to mean not merely the expression of pious sentiments, but the actual practice of sharing possessions to meet the needs of others in the spirit of true mutual aid. Hans Leopold, a Swiss Brethren martyr of 1528, said of the Brethren:

> If they know of any one who is in need, whether or not he is a member of their church, they believe it their duty, out of love to God, to render help and aid.[48]

[45] Böhmer-Kirn, *op. cit.*, 97.

[46] Horsch, *op. cit.*, 386.

[47] P. Tschackert, *Die Entstehung der Lutherischen und reformierten Kirchenlehre* (Göttingen, 1910), 133, says of the Anabaptists that they were "a voluntary Christian fellowship, striving to conform to the Christian spirit for the practice of brotherly love."

[48] Johannes Kühn, *op. cit.*, 231.

Heinrich Seiler, a Swiss Brethren martyr of 1535, said:

> I do not believe it wrong that a Christian has property of his own, but yet he is nothing more than a steward.[49]

An early Hutterian book states that one of the questions addressed by the Swiss Brethren to applicants for baptism was: "Whether they would consecrate themselves with all their temporal possessions to the service of God and His people."[50] A Protestant of Strassburg, visitor at a Swiss Brethren baptismal service in that city in 1557, reports that a question addressed to all applicants for baptism was: "Whether they, if necessity required it, would devote all their possessions to the service of the brotherhood, and would not fail any member that is in need, if they were able to render aid."[51] Heinrich Bullinger, the bitter enemy of the Brethren states:

> They teach that every Christian is under duty before God from motives of love, to use, if need be, all his possessions to supply the necessities of life to any of the brethren who are in need.[52]

This principle of full brotherhood and stewardship was actually practiced, and not merely speculatively considered. In its absolute form of Christian communism, with the complete repudiation of private property, it became the way of life of the Hutterian Brotherhood in 1528 and has remained so to this day, for the Hutterites held that private property is the greatest enemy of Christian love. One of the inspiring stories of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is the successful practice of the full communal way of life by this group.[53]

The third great element in the Anabaptist vision was the ethic of love and nonresistance as applied to all human relationships. The Brethren understood this to mean complete abandonment of all war-

[49] Ernst Müller, *op. cit.*, 44. See Ernst Correll, *op. cit.*, 15f., on the attitude of the various Anabaptist groups on community of goods.

[50] Horsch, *op. cit.*, 317.

[51] A. Hulshof, *Geschiedenis van de Doopsgezinden te Straatsburg van 1525 tot* 1557 (Amsterdam, 1905) 216.

[52] Bullinger, *Der Widertäufferen Ursprung,* fol. 129v.

[53] John Horsch, *The Hutterian Brethren 1528-1931* (Goshen, Indiana, 1931), gives the only adequate account in English of the Hutterian Brethren. It is of interest to note that Erasmus, Melanchthon, and Zwingli condemned private ownership of property as a sin. See Paul Wernle, *Renaissance and Reformation* (Tübingen, 1912), 54-55, for the citations of Erasmus and Melanchthon, and Horsch, *Hutterian Brethren,* 132, footnote 126, for the citation of Zwingli. Wilhelm Pauck says that Bucer's ideal state was that of Christian communism, "Martin Bucer's Conception of a Christian State," in *Princeton Theological Review,* (XXVI).

fare, strife, and violence, and of the taking of human life.[54] Conrad Grebel, the Swiss, said in 1524:

True Christians use neither worldly sword nor engage in war, since among them taking human life has ceased entirely, for we are no longer under the Old Covenant. . . . The Gospel and those who accept it are not to be protected with the sword, neither should they thus protect themselves.[55]

Pilgram Marpeck, the South German leader, in 1544, speaking of Matthew 5, said:

All bodily, worldly, carnal, earthly fighting, conflicts, and wars are annulled and abolished among them through such law . . . which law of love Christ . . . himself observed and thereby gave his followers a pattern to follow after.[56]

Peter Riedemann, the Hutterian leader, wrote in 1545:

Christ, the Prince of Peace, has established His Kingdom, that is, His Church, and has purchased it by His blood. In this kingdom all worldly warfare has ended. Therefore a Christian has no part in war nor does he wield the sword to execute vengeance.[57]

Menno Simons, of Holland, wrote in 1550:

The regenerated do not go to war, nor engage in strife. . . . They are the children of peace who have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and know of no war . . . Spears and swords of iron we leave to those who, alas, consider human blood and swine's blood of well-nigh equal value.[58]

In this principle of nonresistance, or Biblical pacifism, which was thoroughly believed and resolutely practiced by all the original Anabaptist Brethren and their descendants throughout Europe from the

[54] Not all the Anabaptsts were completely nonresistant. Balthasar Hubmaier for instance for a brief period (1526-28) led a group of Anabaptists at Nikolsburg in Moravia who agreed to carry the sword against the Turk and pay special war taxes for this purpose. This group, which became extinct in a short time, was known as the "Schwertler" in distinction from the other Moravian Anabaptists called the "Stäbler," who later became the Hutterites and have continued to the present. It is obvious that Hubmaier and the "Schwertler" represent a transient aberration from original and authentic Anabaptism. Bullinger (*Von dem unverschampten fräfel* [1531] fol. 139v.) testifies that the Swiss Brethren considered war to be "das ergist uebel das man erdencken mag," and (*Der Widertäufferen Ursprung* [1561] fol. 16r.) says "they do not defend themselves, therefore they do not go to war and are not obedient to the government on this point." See also the extensive compilation of evidence by John Horsch in his booklet, *The Principle of Nonresistance as Held by the Mennonite Church, A Historical Survey* (Scottdale, Pa., 1927), 60 pages.

[55] Letter of Grebel to Müntzer, Böhmer-Kirn, *op. cit.*, 97.

[56] (Pilgram Marpeck), *Testamenterleütterung* (n.d., n.p., ca. 1544). fol. 313r.

[57] (Peter Riedemann), *Rechenschaft unserer Religion, Lehre und Glaubens, von den Bruedern die Man die Hutterischen nennt* (Berne, Indiana. 1902). 105.

[58] *The Complete Works of Menno Simons* (Elkhart, Indiana, 1871), I. 170b and 81b. The quotations were revised by comparison with the Dutch editions of 1664 and 1681.

beginning until the last century,[59] the Anabaptists were again creative leaders, far ahead of their times, in this antedating the Quakers by over a century and a quarter. It should also be remembered that they held this principle in a day when both Catholic and Protestant churches not only endorsed war as an instrument of state policy, but employed it in religious conflicts. It is true, of course, that occasional earlier prophets, like Peter Chelčicky, had advocated similar views, but they left no continuing practice of the principle behind them.

As we review the vision of the Anabaptists, it becomes clear that there are two foci in this vision. The first focus relates to the essential nature of Christianity. Is Christianity primarily a matter of the reception of divine grace through a sacramental-sacerdotal institution (Roman Catholicism), is it chiefly enjoyment of the inner experience of the grace of God through faith in Christ (Lutheranism), or is it most of all the transformation of life through discipleship (Anabaptism)? The Anabaptists were neither institutionalists, mystics, nor pietists, for they laid the weight of their emphasis upon following Christ in life. To them it was unthinkable for one truly to be a Christian without creating a new life on divine principles both for himself and for all men who commit themselves to the Christian way.

The second focus relates to the church. For the Anabaptist, the church was neither an institution (Catholicism), nor the instrument of God for the proclamation of the divine Word (Lutheranism), nor a resource group for individual piety (Pietism). It was a brotherhood of love in which the fullness of the Christian life ideal is to be expressed.

The Anabaptist vision may be further clarified by comparison of the social ethics of the four main Christian groups of the Reformation period, Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, and Anabaptist. Catholic and Calvinist alike were optimistic about the world, agreeing that the world can be redeemed; they held that the entire social order can be brought under the sovereignty of God and Christianized, although they used different means to attain this goal. Lutheran and Anabaptist were pessimistic about the world, denying the

[59] Mennonites of Holland, Germany, France, and Switzerland gradually abandoned nonresistance in the course of the nineteenth century. The emigrant Mennonites in Russia and North America have maintained it. The Mennonites of the United States furnish forty percent of all conscientious objectors in Civilian Public Service in the present war, and the Mennonites of Canada a still higher percent of the conscientious objectors in that country.

possibility of Christianizing the entire social order; but the consequent attitudes of these two groups toward the social order were diametrically opposed. Lutheranism said that since the Christian must live in a world order that remains sinful, he must make a compromise with it. As a citizen he cannot avoid participation in the evil of the world, for instance in making war, and for this his only recourse is to seek forgiveness by the grace of God; only within his personal private experience can the Christian truly Christianize his life. The Anabaptist rejected this view completely. Since for him no compromise dare be made with evil, the Christian may in no circumstance participate in any conduct in the existing social order which is contrary to the spirit and teaching of Christ and the apostolic practice. He must consequently withdraw from the worldly system and create a Christian social order within the fellowship of the church brotherhood. Extension of this Christian order by the conversion of individuals and their transfer out of the world into the church is the only way by which progress can be made in Christianizing the social order.

However, the Anabaptist was realistic. Down the long perspective of the future he saw little chance that the mass of humankind would enter such a brotherhood with its high ideals. Hence he anticipated a long and grievous conflict between the church and the world. Neither did he anticipate the time when the church would rule the world; the church would always be a suffering church. He agreed with the words of Jesus when he said that those who would be his disciples must deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow him, and that there would be few who would enter the strait gate and travel the narrow way of life. If this prospect should seem too discouraging, the Anabaptist would reply that the life within the Christian brotherhood is satisfyingly full of love and joy.

The Anabaptist vision was not a detailed blueprint for the reconstruction of human society, but the Brethren did believe that Jesus intended that the Kingdom of God should be set up in the midst of earth, here and now, and this they proposed to do forthwith. We shall not believe, they said, that the Sermon on the Mount or any other vision that He had is only a heavenly vision meant but to keep His followers in tension until the last great day, but we shall practice what He taught, believing that where He walked we can by His grace follow in His steps.

EXTINCT OHIO MENNONITE CHURCHES

II. Wood County

(Montgomery Township, near Jerry City)

John Umble

In connection with the writer's research in Ohio Mennonite Sunday-school history he had found in obituary notices and in field notes printed in the *Herald of Truth* references to a Mennonite congregation in Wood County, and more specifically to a Mennonite minister, Jacob Kaempfer. He could find no one, however, who knew anything about the history or the location of the congregation. Finally, in 1931 he motored to Bowling Green, the county seat, consulted county telephone directories for possible Mennonite names and made a few telephone calls none of which shed any light on the problem. He then settled down to the long and tedious process of examining courthouse records to discover in what part of the county Mennonites had lived or where a Mennonite church had been located.

These records revealed that the first Mennonite settlers had bought land in various parts of the county. At one time between 1835-40, it seemed that an Amish settlement might spring up in Troy Township in the northeastern part of Wood County, south of Lemoyne. Several Holmes County, Richland County, and Wayne County Amish and Mennonites purchased land in that vicinity. Among others were David Schloneker, of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania; Isaac Smucker (spelled Smocker), and Sarah, his wife; John Troyer, of Holmes County; Abraham W. Beery, of Fairfield County; and Christopher Bair, and his wife, Barbara, of Columbiana County. The Bairs purchased eighty acres from the United States Government in May, 1835. They seem never to have moved to Wood County. At any rate, this Christopher Bair, and his wife, Barbara, were living in Holmes County, possibly near the Kolb meetinghouse, when they sold this property on December 8, 1838.

Although some Amish and Mennonite settlers received grants on the Ohio frontier from the United States Government, they seldom moved on unimproved land. And although Mennonites purchased land at various points in Wood County, they gradually settled

in a more or less compact community in the southeastern corner of the county near the intersection of four townships: Portage, northwest of the intersection: Montgomery, northeast; Perry, southeast; and Bloom, southwest. The church was located eighty rods east of the southwestern corner of Montgomery Township on the north side of the road and the cemetery a few rods east of the church but across the South Branch of the Portage River and on the south side of the road; hence about eighty-five rods east of the northwest corner of Perry Township.

After research in the deed records revealed the location of the settlement, the writer drove south of Bowling Green eight miles to the boundary between Portage and Bloom Townships then east to Jerry City. Inquiry concerning the Mennonite settlement proved fruitless; but, driving on east, the writer reached a little cemetery, the final resting place of the early Mennonite settlers. All signs of the location of the church seemed to have disappeared. The people living at a neighboring farmhouse, which the writer later learned was the former home of Jacob and Elizabeth Pletcher, were only puzzled on being asked where the Mennonite church had stood, until someone suddenly said, "Maybe he means the Meneese!" That was the solution to the mystery. The Wood County Mennonites being Wisler, and therefore German, were known only as "die Meniste," or "the Meneese" among their neighbors.

The writer was then directed to the spot across the road where the church had stood. Like the Seneca County Mennonite meetinghouse, it had rested on six large natural boulders. These stones had been removed a few years previous but the depressions, now overgrown with sod, were still plainly visible. Judged from these marks the dimensions of this building, like most of the first log churches on the frontier, appear to have been 24 by 30 feet. On this visit (in 1931) the writer had the pleasure of meeting William S. Tyson, great-grandson of the pioneer Daniel Tyson, and also Mrs. Veronica (Franey) Boyer, last surviving Mennonite in the community and a cousin of W. S. Tyson. She died later in the same year.

As was true in many frontier communities, the first church services in Perry Township were conducted by members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The first meeting was held in 1837. Their meetinghouse, a tiny log structure, built on Section Twenty-eight about three miles south of the present village of West Millgrove, cost twenty-five dollars. Members of the Dunkard Church also built a

small meetinghouse in what was known as the Whitmore neighborhood.

The first white child born in Perry Township was Abraham Weaver's daughter, Nancy, who was born April 1, 1833. She became the wife of Nathaniel Hiestand, of Fostoria. Peter Weaver, possibly a brother of Abraham, also was living in Wood County as early as 1839. He sold land in Wood County to Stephen Cupp in 1844.

Early purchasers in the neighborhood which later became the Mennonite settlement included the names of many settlers who may have been Mennonites. Some are known to have been members of that denomination. Abraham Welday, and his wife, Jane, were living in Wayne County, Ohio, when they sold property in Wood County to Thomas Starr, of Columbiana County, Ohio, in November, 1843. John Achilburger (Eichelbarger) sold land in Wood County in 1847. Charles Boyer, and wife, Mary, were living in Seneca County, Ohio, when they sold Wood County property to Samuel Baer of Niagara County, New York, in December 9, 1835. Samuel Bair, Jr., and his wife, Mary, were living in Wood County when they purchased a forty-acre tract for $300 in February, 1837, and were residents of Wood County until at least two years later. Jacob Brubaker resided in Wood County when he paid $445 for eighty acres in Perry Township southwest of West Millgrove in 1851. Two wives of Jacob Brubaker, Eliza and Sarah, and two daughters of Jacob and Eliza, named Louisa and Phebe, are buried in the West Millgrove cemetery. All died between August, 1850, and April, 1854.

Andrew Morr or Moor, and his wife, Elizabeth, sold eighty acres in Portage Township to Christian Eichelberger, of Richland County, in April, 1842. They sold another eighty to William Pletcher for $285 in December, 1844. Pletcher sold this for $600 in August, 1852, when he moved to Elkhart County south of Middlebury. John Legron paid $3,000 for one hundred and sixty acres in Montgomery Township in April, 1854. Samuel and Christiana Landis[1] received a United States grant in Portage Township in May, 1835, and probably moved to Wood County, but they were living in Ashland County when they sold eighty acres to Daniel Tyson, of Columbiana County, Ohio, one-half mile west of the church in 1848.

[1]The maiden name of the mother of a certain Emanuel Legron, of Wood County, was Sarah Landis.

Abraham and Sarah Wisler, of Stark County, Ohio, purchased land in Troy Township in May, 1835, and were living there when they sold in November, 1840. Henry Troxel, of Seneca County, Ohio,[2] bought forty acres four miles south of the church but sold it at cost fourteen months later. A certain Samuel Troxel owned forty acres six miles north and about two miles west of the church. Thomas Hofstetter, of Wayne County, Ohio, received an eighty-acre grant from the United States Government five miles east of the church on December 13, 1835, mortgaged it for $245 on March 17, 1845, and sold it October 3, 1850, for $1,025.[3] Christian Cupp and Stephen Cupp, Methodists, purchased several tracts in 1844. Michael Musser, in October, 1840, purchased 160 acres one and one-half miles north of the church. He (and others) sold forty acres for $500 about a mile north of the church in July, 1850. Samuel Musser in May, 1840, purchased a quarter section five miles north and a mile west of the church.

An Emanuel Meyers, of Brown County, Illinois, purchased land in Portage Township about four miles north of the corner near which the church was later located. Henry Meyers, of Erie County, New York, bought eighty acres in Montgomery Township nearly seven miles east of the church. It is not certain, however, that he ever lived in the neighborhood of the Mennonite church. He was living in Sandusky County, Ohio, when he sold this tract for $200 on November 26, 1845. It had cost him $100 a number of years earlier. He probably did not make any improvements on it. Samuel Meyer, of Northampton County, Pennsylvania, acquired two tracts in Bloom Township in August, 1837. He was a merchant living in Wood County when he sold them in 1842.

[2] This may be the Henry Troxel who was one of the ministers in Seneca County, Ohio, in 1842. One Henry Troxel who had been a member of the Mennonite Church for thirty years died in Seneca County of typhoid fever on September 2, 1869, at the age of fifty-nine. Funeral services were in charge of a Reverend Druckenmiller.

[3] It is interesting to find among the very early Perry Township purchasers of land from the United States Government the name of Thomas Bodyston, of Wayne County, who purchased the east half of the northwest quarter of Section Twenty-five in Perry Township on August 12, 1833. He also bought the west half of the northeast quarter of Section Twenty-five on September 18 of the same year. This seems to be the same Thomas Boydston whose name appears in the pre-Mennonite history of several Ohio communities. He had purchased land in Green Township, Wayne County, when that county was still a wilderness. He disposed of his holdings to Mennonite, or rather Amish, settlers and then purchased several tracts of land in Chester Township, Wayne County, twenty or thirty miles farther west. These he also sold to Mennonite settlers. He and his wife, Elizabeth, sold both of their Perry Township tracts in Wood County on May 10, 1838, realizing about $300 profit on an investment of $400 in less than three years.

The leading Mennonite families in Wood County in the early years seem to have been the Tysons, Pletchers, Rissers, Legrons, Bachmans, Boyers, and Brandts. The Tysons were a Franconia (Pa.) District family,[4] the earliest Tysons (spelled Tiesen?) having arrived at Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1703. Numerous families of Pletchers lived on the frontier. Some of them emigrated to America in the early years of the nineteenth century and, like other settlers, stopped for a time in Lancaster County, Pa., before moving westward. There were at least six Jacob Pletchers as early as 1850. Some Risser families emigrated to America before the Revolutionary War and were living in Lancaster County in the late years of the eighteenth century. Because they preferred a kingdom to a republic, some of them moved to Ontario, Canada, where their name sometimes was spelled Recer or Reesor. Several families left the Bavarian Palatinate in 1832 and 1833 (Henry Risser in 1845), settled in Ashland County, Ohio, and later moved westward. The name Legron, sometimes spelled Lechrone or Legrone, was pronounced very much like Leghorn.

The names Bachman and Brandt are common in Lancaster County and other Mennonite settlements. At least one Brandt family moved to Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, from Berne, Switzerland, about 1817 and later to Wayne County, Ohio, where Christian Brandt was one of the Amish ministers at the Oak Grove Amish Mennonite Church in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Boyers originally came from Silesia in Austria and settled in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Some members of the family stopped successively in Butler County, Pennsylvania; Mahoning County, Ohio; and Ashland County, Ohio. Some of their descendants still reside in those counties, also in the state of Michigan and in Elkhart County, Indiana.

Daniel Tyson, one of the earlier Mennonite settlers in Wood County, was born in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, August 11, 1792, and in 1825 married Elizabeth Landis, also of Montgomery County.[5] After their marriage they moved to Knox Township, Columbiana County, Ohio. Later they purchased from

[4] Cornelius Tyson. See Harold S. Bender, "Germantown Mennonite Church," in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. VII (October, 1933), 233 and following. Dr. Bender states that Cornelius Tyson was a member of the colony as early as 1703.

[5] This Daniel Tyson, the pioneer, was the great-grandfather of Wm. S. Tyson, of Wayne, County, Ohio, to whom the writer is indebted for much valuable assistance in collecting this history.

Samuel and Christiana Landis,[6] of Ashland County, Ohio, (possibly the parents of Elizabeth [Landis] Tyson,) eighty acres in Section Thirty-Six at the southwest corner of Portage Township in Wood County near the later location of the Mennonite meetinghouse, and reared their family there. Daniel Tyson died in Wood County on March 17, 1874, at the age of eighty-one while he was walking to meeting on Sunday morning. His wife, Elizabeth, died in September of the next year at the age of eighty. They were the parents of six surviving children: four sons, David, Henry, Isaac, and George; and two daughters, Maria (or Mary) and Barbara.

David, the eldest son, was one of the trustees of the Wood County Mennonite church and cemetery. Never being of robust health he took up weaving and wove the cloth needed by all the families in the neighborhood. He had two looms. His granddaughter, Mrs. Henry Honderich (Bertha Boyer), of Middlebury, Indiana, has in her possession a linen towel woven by him. On account of his health he moved to Alanson, Michigan, with his son-in-law, Dr. David K. Boyer, in 1884. He died in Michigan within a few months after he moved to that place.

Henry Tyson served the Wood County congregation as deacon. He was twice married. His first wife, Deborah Keyser, died in August, 1870. He married as his second wife, his first wife's widowed sister, Anna (Keyser) Boyer who died in 1881. Henry Tyson was a sawmiller and carpenter. One of the houses which he built, and in which he hand-finished all the trim, is still standing. He operated a sawmill, shingle mill, and a cider press in Montgomery Township, one-fourth mile west and two miles north of the church. The sawmill was of the old up and down type driven by steam power, and not the circular saw type in use at the present time. When Henry Tyson retired, his sons, David K. and Jacob, formed a partnership and operated the sawmill and cider press for several years. When David K. sold his interest in the business to Jacob, the latter conducted it alone until the buildings burned. Then Jacob built a shingle mill on the same site. After David K. sold his share to his brother, he purchased another sawmill eighty rods west of the hewn-log Mennonite church. This mill he dis-

[6] Hill's *History of Ashland County* states (p. 249) that Christena (sic!), wife of Samuel Landis, was the daughter of Jacob and Elizabeth (Herring) Berry, that the Berrys were Lutherans, and that Jacob Berry moved to Wayne County, Ohio, in 1819.

mantled and shipped to Michigan in 1884, as stated below. Henry Tyson died on October 11, 1901, at the age of eighty years and was buried in the Mennonite cemetery in Perry Township.

Isaac also lived one-fourth mile west and two miles north of the church but in Portage Township across the road and west of his brother Henry. He was a farmer and coffinmaker. During an epidemic of what was known as the "milk sickness" following the Civil War he and his sons were kept busy almost day and night manufacturing coffins in the cabinet shop on his farm. Isaac moved to Michigan in 1884 and eventually to Elkhart County, Indiana.

George, the youngest son of Daniel and Elizabeth (Landis) Tyson, married Frances Snyder, who was born in Mahoning County, Ohio, January 19, 1833. In 1858 George Tyson united with the German Baptist Church and was ordained a local minister the following year. He was later advanced to the full ministry and retired in 1891. He was much in demand for preaching funeral sermons in the Mennonite community because he could preach English and it was the custom at funerals to have the services conducted in German by the Mennonite preacher and in English by a preacher of some other denomination. This was done to make it possible for non-Mennonite relatives who could not speak German and for other English members of the community, to understand the sermon.

Maria and Barbara, the two daughters of Daniel and Elizabeth Tyson, married, respectively, Isaac Hunsicker and John Eichelbarger.[7] Mrs. Isaac Hunsicker died in Wood County, November 12, 1881, and was buried in the Mennonite cemetery. Most of the third generation of the Tyson family eventually moved either to Brutus, Michigan, or to Elkhart County, Indiana.[8] Some of them moved to Brutus and later returned to Wood County where their descendants still live. Among those who moved to Michigan were Isaac Henry Tyson. He was born in Wood County September 2, 1853, and on July 19, 1883, married Rebecca Cupp, a daughter of Washington Cupp, brother of Jackson Cupp men-

[7] The Eichelbargers, some of whom were Mennonites in the earlier years, later were members of the Dunkard Church located two miles east of Jerry City. The Dunkard congregation, like the Mennonite, has disappeared entirely; but there is a Progressive Brethren Church in Fostoria.

[8] A large number of the ancestors of Elkhart County Mennonites moved to Indiana between 1845 and 1865 from Mennonite congregations in Ohio. In 1846 the Mennonite congregation in the vicinity of Yellow Creek numbered only sixteen members. A certain Martin Huber was their preacher. See *Herald of Truth,* II (March, 1865), 21.

tioned below. In the spring after their marriage, they moved to Alanson, Michigan, where he homesteaded a quarter section in 1884. He died at his home at that place on April 9, 1931. His widow is still living (1943) at Brutus, Michigan. W. S. Tyson remembers the wedding ceremony of Isaac Tyson and Rebecca Cupp performed in the Wood County church.[9]

Susan, a sister of Isaac Henry Tyson is living (1944) in northern Indiana. She is the widow of Dr. David K. Boyer who moved to Michigan in the spring of 1884. She celebrated her eighty-eighth birthday at the home of her daughter, Bertha (Mrs. Henry Honderich), near Middlebury, Indiana, in February, 1944. She is a member of the Old Order (Wisler) Mennonite Church.

Two other sons of David Tyson, Samuel and John, also moved to Michigan. Samuel was the husband of Diana Baker, and John, of Dora Cupp. Samuel and Diana Tyson died on the Michigan farm which they homesteaded in 1884. Their eldest son, E. W. Tyson, now lives on that farm. David K. Tyson was always in the sawmill business. When he returned from Michigan, he purchased a sawmill about eighty rods west of the church where he operated a shingle mill, a cider press, and a sawmill of the circular type.

As already stated, another prominent family was the Pletchers. Jacob and Elizabeth Pletcher at one time owned about two hundred acres in the northwest corner of Perry Township, that is, in Section Six where the cemetery is located. They were living in Richland County, Ohio, when they purchased about 100 acres in the northwest quarter of Section Six of Perry Township on May 6, 1841, and probably moved to Wood County soon after. The Pletcher family Bible in possession of Anna, eldest daughter of Bartholemew Risser and widow of Christian Pletcher, gives important genealogical data. Jacob and Elizabeth Pletcher were married on May 4, 1833.[10] Jacob Pletcher, so the record states, was the son of Henry Pletcher and Barbary [sic] Pletcher and was born January 13, 1806. His wife Elizabeth, was the daughter of Jacob and Barbara Pletcher and was born January, 1816.[11]

[9] Performance of the ceremony in the Mennonite meetinghouse indicates that both were members of that congregation at the time of their marriage.

[10] Two of Jacob Pletcher's sisters were the first and second wives, respectively, of Preacher John Nusbaum, of Ashland County, Ohio, later of Clinton Township, Elkhart County, Indiana. Descendants of this John Nusbaum are still living in the eastern part of Elkhart County. Barbara, wife of Henry Risser, formerly of Middlebury, Indiana, was a daughter of Preacher John Nusbaum.

[11] According to tradition, Jacob Pletcher and his wife, Elizabeth, were first cousins.

The children of Jacob and Elizabeth Pletcher were: William, born January 21, 1835; Henry, born February 23, 1836; Barbara, born March 25, 1837; Mary, born July 20, 1838; Anna, born March 8, 1840; Israel, born August 7, 1842; Christopher, born November 13, 1844; Samuel, born April 19, 1849; John, born December 27, 1850; Mary Elizabeth, born February 12, 1852; Joseph, born July 20, 1855; and Susana [sic] born May 28, 1861, married to William Fink in Elkhart County. Three of these children of Jacob and Elizabeth Pletcher, Mary, John and Barbara, are buried in the West Millgrove cemetery. They died in 1848, 1850, and 1853, aged, respectively, five years, three weeks, and sixteen years. This probably indicates that no burials had been made in the cemetery near the Mennonite church before 1853. Three others, Israel, Joseph, and Jacob, are buried in the Mennonite cemetery on property once owned by Jacob and Elizabeth Pletcher.[12] They deeded the Perry Township cemetery plot to the trustees of the Mennonite Church in 1856.

Henry Pletcher, son of Jacob and Elizabeth Pletcher, was ordained to the ministry and served the Wood County Mennonite congregation. He lived in Bloom Township a mile and one-half south and two miles east of Jerry City until he moved to Elkhart County. Samuel Pletcher's wife was Mary Boyer, of Wood County, a sister of Dr. D. K. Boyer, hence a daughter of Abraham Boyer. Samuel Pletcher, at his death in 1931 was survived by a son, John, and by Mary Elizabeth (Mrs. D. D. Troyer, of Goshen); also by Barbara, widow of the late John M. Troup, of Goshen. Christopher Pletcher, later known as Christian, did not unite with the Mennonite Church until old age when he was baptized into the M. B. C. Church. The descendants of Susan (Mrs. William Fink) live in Elkhart County. One of them is (1943) in training at the Mennonite Hospital Training School for nurses at La Junta, Colorado.

In some of the earlier Mennonite settlements, the marriage of first cousins was not uncommon. In fact it was not uncommon among non-Mennonites on the frontier. The Jacob and Barbara Pletcher mentioned here as the parents of Elizabeth Pletcher, probably are the Jacob and Barbara who died in Elkhart County in October, 1870, aged, respectively, eighty-one and seventy-three.

12 Israel's death in 1865 was caused by typhoid fever. John and Jacob, who died in September and December, 1869, probably succumbed to a bilious fever during the baffling epidemic that swept southeastern Wood County for several autumns following the Civil War and that never was satisfactorily diagnosed by the local doctors.

Several other Pletcher families lived in Perry Township. A certain John Pletcher, said to have been a brother of Elizabeth, Jacob Pletcher's wife, sold land in Perry Township to Peter Nusbaum of Richland County,[13] April 6, 1842. Peter Nusbaum died before moving to Wood County and is buried in the Pleasant Ridge cemetery in Ashland County. His executor, Henry Rutt, of Milton Township, Ashland County, sold the Peter Nusbaum proprety in Wood County to Henry Risser, then a resident of Perry Township, Wood County, on October 30, 1854.

Another Pletcher, Christian, purchased sixty acres in the northwest quarter of Section Eight about a mile and one-half east and a mile south of the church on August 9, 1847. He was living in Wood County at the time of his purchase.

One of the trustees of the Mennonite church and cemetery was Christian Risser. He was born in Germany in May, 1812, and came to America in 1829 landing at New York and coming to Ashland County by way of Buffalo and Cleveland. He blistered his feet in walking to Ashland. He was a shoemaker by trade and helped his brothers, Jacob and Henry, to come to America. The Risser families came to America because the laws had made military training for all boys compulsory, but no doubt also because of the glowing accounts that reached Germany of economic opportunity in America. While he was living in Ashland County, then known as Richland County, Christian married Mary Risser, not a relative. Their children were Abraham, a shoemaker, Daniel, Christian A., a shoe dealer, and Mary.[14] In the spring of 1848 Christian Risser traded his house and lot in Ashland to John C. Hunsicker[15] for a one-hundred sixty acre tract in Section Thirty-Five in Portage Township, Wood County. This was a little west of the Mennonite church. His second wife was Magdalene Eichelbarger,[16] also born in Germany.[17]

[13] This Peter Nusbaum was a brother of Preacher John Nusbaum, also of Richland County, later of Clinton Township, Elkhart County, Indiana (Clinton Brick Church). John was the grandfather of Preacher Amos Nusbaum.

[14] This Mary Risser married Moses Legron, son of John Legron, Sr. (see footnote No. 19.) They were not members of the Mennonite Church.

[15] The name of a certain John C. Hunsicker appears in the history of the Seneca County Mennonite Church.

[16] As already mentioned, one of the Eichelbargers, John, married Barbara, daughter of Daniel Tyson. They were members of the Dunkard church. The earlier Eichelbargers were Mennonites. Christian Eichelbarger, probably the father of Christian Risser's second wife, was one of the trustees of the Wood County Mennonite Church. Tradition names Henry Eichelbarger a deacon of the Wood County congregation.

[17] Magdalene (Eichelbarger) Risser died in 1882, aged sixty years, and is buried

After his arrival in Wood County, Christian Risser set up a shoeshop and employed three men. One winter he paid a forty-dollar doctor bill with maple syrup and sugar which he had manufactured in his own woods. In 1853 he traded his oxen and cows for a property in West Millgrove. Later he moved to Section Ten in Perry Township southwest of West Millgrove, where he continued his trade of repairing shoes. He died in February, 1886, and was buried at West Millgrove. The services were conducted by a Preacher Thompson because the Mennonite Church was no longer conducting services. A contemporary says of Christian Risser that he was a Mennonite and very easygoing. He helped everyone and never sued. After his death he had on his books two thousand dollars that he had never collected from his creditors. Everyone with a hard luck story could get money from him. His son, Edward R., was a deacon in the Congregational Church in Millgrove.

Research has not disclosed the residence or the family of Jacob Risser, the brother of Christian Risser, the trustee. Rev. John Risser, of Richland County, in a letter to his relatives in the Bavarian Palatinate about 1840 mentions a Jacob Risser who died "out West" leaving a widow and several small children. "Out West" might mean Wood County, Ohio; Elkhart County, Indiana; Illinois, or even Iowa, where scattered settlements were started at a very early date.

Christian Risser's brother Henry, with a wife and ten children crossed the Atlantic in May, 1845, and settled in Ashland County, Ohio. In 1849 the family moved to Wood County where, as already mentioned, Henry Risser on October 30, 1854, purchased part of the property belonging to the Peter Nusbaum estate. His wife, Elizabeth, died in October, 1866, and lies buried in the Wood County Mennonite cemetery.

Apparently three of the ten children of Henry and Elizabeth Risser died in infancy or early childhood. The surviving relatives know of five sons—Jacob, Lewis, Henry, Bartholomew (Bartley), and Christian—and three daughters, Mary, Catherine (never married), and Elizabeth. Some time after the death of his wife in Wood County in October, 1866, Henry Risser moved to Elkhart

beside her husband. Here lie buried also their daughter Cornelia, who died in 1863 at the age of seven, and Abraham F., who died in 1865, aged twenty-seven.

County, Indiana, where he died in 1889 at the age of eighty-four and was buried in the Olive cemetery.

Henry Risser's son, Jacob, who was ten years old when his parents came to America, preceded his father to Elkhart County, settling there soon after the beginning of the Civil War. On March 1, 1866, he married Barbara Stauffer. He did not unite with the Mennonite Church until August 12, 1912, about six weeks before his death. His wife, two sons, and three daughters survived him.

Henry Risser, Jr., also moved to Elkhart County while he was still single, probably in 1868 with his father, and his brother, Christian. In 1869 he married Barbara Nusbaum, daughter of Preacher John and Mary (Pletcher) Nusbaum, of the Clinton Brick congregation south of Middlebury. She was born in Richland (now Ashland) County, Ohio, in 1851, moved to Indiana with her parents in 1860, and united with the Mennonite Church in the same year in which she was married. Henry Risser died in 1881 at the age of forty, and his widow in 1910.

Although the entire Henry Risser family was highly respected, Bartholomew seems to have been the most beloved of all. He was born in Germany on November 27, 1842, died near Wakarusa, Indiana, on December 19, 1928, at the age of eighty-six, and was buried in the Olive cemetery. On June 4, 1868, in Wood County, Ohio, he married Mary Pletcher, daughter of Jacob and Elizabeth Pletcher who donated the land for the Wood County Mennonite cemetery. She was born February 12, 1852. The fact that Bartholomew and Mary Risser transferred their membership to the Olive congregation when they moved to Elkhart County in 1881 rather than to the Wisler congregation at Yellow Creek, probably shows that the extreme conservatism of a certain element in the Wood County congregation was one of the reasons why the members of the congregation kept moving away. Bartley Risser was the last surviving member of the Henry Risser family. His wife had died during the February preceding his death. Their surviving children were a son, William, and three daughters, Anna (Mrs. Christian Pletcher), Elizabeth (Mrs. Joseph Nusbaum) and Mrs. Abram Martin. One of their children, an infant son, is buried in Wood County.

Christian, the youngest son of Henry Risser, was born on May 5, 1845, on the Atlantic Ocean, while his parents were mak-

ing the voyage to America. He was a carpenter, never married, and made his home with his brother, Jacob, until the latter's death in 1912. He died on December 5, 1928, approximately a year after he had united with the M.B.C. Church. He is buried beside his father in the Olive cemetery in Elkhart County.

Lewis Risser and his sister Mary never left Wood County and did not unite with the Mennonite Church.[18] Mary Risser married George Milner. Lewis Risser and his brother-in-law Milner were the last trustees of the Wood County Mennonite cemetery and deeded the lot to the trustees of Perry Township.

As stated above Elizabeth Risser married Henry Pletcher, son of Jacob and Elizabeth Pletcher, who served the Wood County Mennonite congregation as minister until he and his family moved to Elkhart County in 1882. The interest of her children in the Methodist Sunday school at West Millgrove and their attendance indicate that their mother was broadminded and deeply concerned about their religious education.

John and Fanny (Franey or Veronica) Legron, natives of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, were members of the Mennonite Church in Montgomery Township. Their son, Henry, died of epilepsy in December, 1865. Both John and Fanny Legron died in 1877 and were buried in the Mennonite cemetery. The funeral services were conducted by Jacob Kaempfer in German and George Tyson in English. It is this John and Fanny Legron who deeded the site for the Mennonite church on May 6, 1856.

Johnny and Fanny Legron's son John, known as John Legron, Sr., died at West Millgrove, in Wood County, on April 10, 1874. His obituary notice states that he "professed religion about a year ago when he was baptized and united with the Winebrennerian Church." Funeral services for John Legron were conducted by a Reverend Smith but he was buried in the Mennonite cemetery. According to the Wood County deed records, the heirs of John Legron, Sr., in 1882, were Abraham and Maria Legron, Benjamin Legron, Samuel and Mary H. Detweiler, Samuel Spraher, Fanny Spraher (these two were living in Illinois), Emanuel and Henry Legron, Moses and Mary Legron,[19] A. B. Witmore and Katie Witmore.

18 Lewis Risser's daughter, Susan, married William Pletcher. They were members of the M.B.C. Church in Elkhart, Indiana.

19 See footnote No. 14.

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The Abraham Boyer family came to Wood County from Mahoning County, Ohio. He and his wife, Elizabeth Keyser, whom he married in 1844, were the ancestors of the Boyers now living near Middlebury, Indiana.[20] Abraham Boyer and his wife, Elizabeth, are buried in the Mennonite cemetery in Perry Township in Wood County. Their surviving children were Abraham K., Dr. David K., Samuel K., Rebecca, Mary, Lydia, and Elizabeth.

Abraham K. Boyer, born in 1854, was a carpenter. He married Mary A. Tyson on December 24, 1871. When she died in 1904 he married her cousin, a daughter of John and Dora (Cupp) Tyson.

The second son of Abraham Boyer, Dr. David K. Boyer, was born in 1857. When he was barely twenty-one he married Susannah, daughter of David Tyson, mentioned above. He was not a member of the church at that time; hence they could not be married by a Mennonite minister, but the ceremony was performed by her uncle, George Tyson, the Dunkard minister. She had worn a hat before she united with the church. When David Tyson's health failed and his physician advised moving to Michigan for a change of climate, David K. Boyer and his family moved with him to Brutus, Michigan. They remained there until David Tyson's death and then moved to Middlebury, Indiana, where Dr. David K. Boyer's descendants still reside. Dr. Boyer practiced medicine for six years in Wood County and then became proprietor of the Medical Institute in 1884 when he settled in Michigan.

When Dr. David K. Boyer and David Tyson moved to Michigan, the latter's brother, Isaac Tyson, and family accompanied him. But after a few years the Isaac Tyson family moved into the Yellow Creek Mennonite settlement in Elkhart County, Indiana. Isaac Tyson is buried in the Wisler Mennonite cemetery near the church. His wife, a faithful member of the Mennonite Church, was Susannah Snyder, a sister of Frances Snyder, the wife of the Dunkard minister, George Tyson. George J., son of Isaac and Susannah (Snyder) Tyson, is living in California.[21] The latter was married four times, first to Elizabeth Boyer, sister of Dr.

[20] Elizabeth (Keyser) Boyer was the sister of Deborah Keyser, wife of Henry Tyson, the deacon.

[21] This George J. Tyson, now eighty-six years old, has given the writer very valuable assistance in collecting the material for this history. On October 22, 1943, he moved to Lemon Cove, California, where he is living with his eldest son, Simon.

David K. Boyer, then to Elizabeth Hurst Witmer, then to Cora Ries, then to Catharine Allgyer Harmon.

The Wood County Boyer family traces its ancestry through a long line of Abraham Boyers to a certain Abraham Beyer born in Silesia about 1690.[22] He married a Silesian girl, Rosina Yeakel, born about 1688, and came to America in 1736 with his wife and children.

His son Abraham Beyer, born in Silesia in 1722, married Barbara Hiestand in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in 1750, and died there in 1796. Their son, Abraham Boyer, born in 1762, had two sons, Abraham and Jacob; there may have been others. Abraham Boyer, the brother of Jacob, was born about 1790, died 1856, and was buried at the Midway church in Mahoning County, Ohio. He was a Mennonite, a teacher, and was married to a Mary Hively who died in 1862. Some of their descendants are members of the Old Mennonite (Wisler) church in Mahoning County.

Abraham (the Wood County Mennonite), son of Abraham and Mary (Hively) Boyer, was born December 19, 1822, at East Lewistown, Mahoning County, Ohio, and died near West Millgrove, Wood County, Ohio, on December 30, 1876. His wife, Elizabeth Keyser, was born February 26, 1823. They were married February 25, 1843, and as stated above, are buried in the Mennonite cemetery in Wood County. They were the parents, as already stated, of the Elkhart County Boyers: Abraham K., who married Mary A. Tyson and who after his wife's death married her cousin; Dr. David K., who married Susan Tyson (still living, 1944, near Middlebury, Indiana); Samuel K. who lived in Wakarusa, and married successively a Miss Stauffer, a Miss Rohrer, and a Miss Hunsberger; Rebecca, who married Isaac Kulp; Mary, married to Samuel Pletcher; Lydia, married to Samuel Troup; and Elizabeth who became the first wife of George J. Tyson, formerly of Wakarusa, later of Dallas, Oregon, and now (1944), of Lemon Cove, California. This family history is interesting for the light it throws not only on European migration to America, but also on the Mennonite migrations westward.

In addition to the families already mentioned, the Overholts, of Fostoria, were members of the Mennonite Church in Wood

22 The Abraham Boyer family, of Wood County, can trace no relationship to the late Abraham M. Boyer, of Ashland County.

County. Elizabeth (Stauffer) Overholt was born February 19, 1794, and died in Fostoria at the home of a son on October 21, 1887. Her children were members of the United Brethren, but she remained a faithful member of the Mennonite Church. The family moved to Fostoria in 1857, from Fayette County, Pennsylvania.

The Cupp family, although all of them originally were Methodists, figure in an important way in the history of the Wood County Mennonite congregation through intermarriage. The Cupps attended the Methodist church near the home of Preacher Henry Pletcher, west of West Millgrove. The latter's children attended the Methodist Sunday school at this church. This was one of the causes of trouble in Wood County. Preacher Henry Pletcher favored Sunday schools, English preaching and evening meetings and was vigorously opposed to the use of tobacco.

Jackson Cupp, who died February 20, 1900, was the grandfather of W. S. Tyson. Jackson Cupp was married twice. His first marriage was the first marriage of a white man in Wood County. When Jackson Cupp's daughter, Angelina, married David K. Tyson, she could not understand German.[23] She had not yet learned the language when she united with the Mennonite Church. Permillia Cupp, who died August 28, 1897, was the second wife of Jackson Cupp. John Tyson, son of David Tyson, the trustee, married Dora Cupp and Isaac Henry Tyson married Rebecca Cupp, a daughter of Washington Cupp, the brother of Jackson Cupp. A certain Stephen Cupp purchased land of Peter Weaver in Wood County in 1844. Christian Cupp also bought property near by in the same year.

At least one Landis family lived in the community for a time and several members of that family were married and lived in the community. Sarah, wife of Jacob Landis, who died in June, 1873. is buried in the Mennonite cemetery.[24]

Tradition states that George Ziegler and his wife, Catherine, who are buried in that cemetery were not Mennonites but were members of the Methodist Church. The migration of the Ziegler family furnishes another interesting sidelight on the westward

[23] David K. Tyson and wife were the parents of Wm. S. Tyson, who states that all the Cupps were Methodists. Jackson and Permillia Cupp, however, are buried in the Mennonite cemetery in Perry township.

[24] A Jacob Landis (died 1855) and his wife, Sarah, are buried in the old cemetery near the Yellow Creek Mennonite (Old Order) meetinghouse in Elkhart County, Indiana.

movement of population during the fore part of the nineteenth century. George and Catherine (Murray) Ziegler, were natives of Maryland. Both were born in 1796. They were married in Pennsylvania and lived in Venango County for fifteen years, then one year in Trumbull County, Ohio, (possibly connected with the Butler County, Pennsylvania, community). They then moved two and one-half miles west of Ashland, Ohio, in what was then Richland County and lived there for six years. The Zieglers, buried in the Ohl's cemetery west of Ashland, probably were relatives. George and Katherine Ziegler next lived near Republic, Scipio Township, Seneca County, Ohio. They spent their remaining days in Portage Township, Wood County, where George Ziegler died in October, 1865, and was buried in the Mennonite cemetery in the corner of Perry Township. His wife died in 1879 and was buried in the same cemetery. Tradition says that George Ziegler was of strong, athletic build. He was six feet tall, and weighed two hundred pounds. His son, J. H., became a class leader in the Methodist Protestant Church in Wood County.

When the early settlers moved into Wood County they found the land low and wet. These were characteristic features of the Black Swamp, as the entire northwestern part of Ohio was then called. Drainage was poor. Spring floods, lasting well into the summer, furnished conditions favorable for typhoid and malaria. Many of the early settlers in this and other northwestern Ohio communities succumbed to these diseases.

When the Dunkard minister, Jacob Whisler, moved into the community at an early period, he built the first house on the highest spot of ground on his land.[25] The next spring the flood covered the entire farm and floated the chips away from the doorsill of his house. But as the heavily wooded area was cleared and the beaver dams destroyed, the country gradually became habitable and Wood County is now one of the most prosperous farming communities in the state.

25 One of the earliest members of the Brethren Church in Wood County was this Dunkard minister, Jacob Whisler, born in Berks county, Pennsylvania, March 3, 1801. He married Anna Funk, born August 27, 1802. They moved to Ohio where his industry and business ability made him one of the prosperous figures on the frontier. He gave each of his five sons three hundred and twenty acres of land and each of his four daughters one hundred and sixty acres. He kept four hundred acres for himself. Although he was a minister in the Dunkard Church, one of his sons living in Bloom Township about 1880 was a minister in the Winebrennerian (Church of God) Church.

It is no longer possible to reconstruct the life of the pious, thriving, industrious Mennonite community in southeastern Wood County. There was the buzz of the sawmill and the tap of the shoemaker's hammer, the gradual changing of the trails into roads, the clearing of the land, the passing of emigrants to the west and of settlers returning east for a visit with relatives and friends. In the first two decades of its history, the Mennonite colony in Wood County became one of the regular stopping places for Mennonites moving farther westward, especially to Elkhart County, Indiana. This community, as well as those in Williams, Allen, Seneca, Richland, Wayne and Columbiana, was also the stopping place of Mennonites going "back east" to visit relatives or for those who, disappointed with frontier life, had decided to return to the older settlements of the east.

When John Thut, later bishop of the Zion congregation near Bluffton, Ohio, moved his family west in three-horse wagons from Holmes County to Allen County, he stopped at all the intervening Mennonite communities, Ashland, Seneca, and Wood. When the Mumaws, moving from Elkhart County, Indiana, back to Wayne, stopped at these settlements, they drove through in a spring wagon.

Naturally, the settlers in the community were not all Mennonites. As already stated, the first organized church service was a class meeting established by the Methodists and no doubt visited regularly by a circuit rider, a young unmarried preacher on horseback who had a charge covering several counties which he visited regularly. Dunkards, also, lived in the community as they did in most communities where Mennonites were to be found. Later the Winebrennerians with their camp meetings and revivals made serious inroads on the other denominations, even breaking across family lines.

One of the outstanding events of the calendar year in Mennonite settlements was the communion service. After the roads had been improved to a certain extent it was customary for members of the Mennonite congregations in the different counties to attend each other's communion service. The preparatory service, called a counsel meeting or an examination meeting and followed a day later by the communion service, was always the occasion for a large gathering at the church. Usually the excellent singing and the somewhat unusual nature of the Mennonite communion service brought together numbers of the neighbors, also. Sometimes the

small frontier Mennonite churches were not able to hold the crowds that gathered for this service.

A number of Mennonite bishops conducted the communion service at the various churches. One of the first was Bishop Jacob Nold, of Columbiana County. His congregation, founded by settlers coming from Montgomery County, Pennsylvania (Franconia Conference), did not observe the ordinance of feet-washing. In order to work with other Ohio ministers and congregations whose first members had come from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, he labored earnestly to persuade his congregation to observe the ordinance and finally succeeded in having them do so. A contemporary of Nold was Bishop Henry Stemen, who moved from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia to Greene County, Pennsylvania, about 1800 then to Fairfield County, Ohio, and finally to Allen County, reaching the latter in 1841.[26]

For a number of years, he made semi-annual visits to all the newer northern Ohio congregations, holding preparatory and communion services as he traveled on his way to or from the annual Mennonite church conference in Wayne or in Columbiana County. He usually traveled on horseback and many times made long trips on foot to conduct communion services or to preach a funeral sermon. According to a letter written in 1832 by Preacher John Risser of Ashland County, the bishop of the Ashland County Mennonite congregations was Jacob Nold, of Columbiana County, Ohio. About 1835 he refers to a local bishop, a certain Bishop Kilmer, who later moved from Ashland County and is lost to Mennonite history. He may have moved to Crawford County where some Kilmers were living on the early frontier. He may have been Bishop Gilmore or Kilmer of the Kolb congregation in Holmes County, Ohio.

In some of the communities during the winter time the weather and the condition of the roads made it impossible to hold services for months at a time. Some of the congregations had regular preaching services only once a month, even in summer; usually, however, every two weeks. Sometimes when a member of the congregation died during the winter, the burial would be made at that time but the funeral service would not be conducted until months later.

[26] See the writer's article on Fairfield County Mennonites in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review,* VI (January, 1932), 5-29, and also VI (April, 1932), 81-109.

Isaac Hoffer, of Williams County, was another Mennonite bishop who served in the northern Ohio congregations but he was never so active as Henry Stemen and others. After Henry Stemen grew too old to undertake the hardships of the long journeys incident to this itinerant preaching, Bishop John M. Brenneman, of Allen County, near Elida, carried on the work. Like Stemen he was a strict disciplinarian but an inspiring preacher and when communion service would be announced at some of the northern Ohio churches, Mennonites came from many miles to hear him preach and to participate in the service. Many times members from Seneca and Wood attended communion services in Ashland and even so far east as Longenecker's and Kolb's in Wayne. Many of the members in all the communities were related by ties of blood and marriage.

After John M. Brenneman ordained John Thut near Bluffton to the bishop's office in 1857, Thut helped to carry on the itinerant ministry. He preferred to travel on foot rather than on horseback and made long journeys in the spring after the floods had subsided or in the fall before winter weather set in.[27]

The few known facts about the Wood County church building and cemetery are interesting. On March 17, 1856, John Legron and his wife, Fannie, deeded to the trustees of the Mennonite Church, Christian Risser.[28], David Tyson, and Henry Echilbarger,[29] a plot of ground six rods square in the southwest corner of the east half of the southwest quarter of Section Thirty-One, in Montgomery Township. This is eighty rods east of the southwest corner of Montgomery Township and on the north side of the road running east and west past the Perry Township (Mennonite) cemetery. The deed specified that the Mennonite church should own the property "so long as the house shall be used as a house of public worship" and that if the Mennonite church at that place should cease to exist, the transfer would be void. The deed also specified that the church should "be open to any denomination to

[27] See the writer's article on "The Zion (Bluffton) Congregation" in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review,* V (July, 1931), 179-97.

[28] This is probably Christian Risser, the shoemaker, mentioned above, probably the cousin of Jacob and Preacher John Risser, of Ashland County, Ohio, three miles north of Haysville. He was the brother of Henry Risser, progenitor of many of the Elkhart County Rissers.

[29] Henry Eichelbarger is said to have been a deacon in the Mennonite Church. Neither Christian Risser nor David Tyson were ordained.

preach funerals but not to be opened to other denominations for common preaching except by permission of the trustees."

The statement in the deed that the "house" shall be used by the Mennonite church seems to indicate that the building was erected before the transfer of the property to the trustees. This is quite likely since it was the custom in the early days for a church member, many times a minister, to erect a building on his land to be used by the church or to allow the congregation to erect such a building. Then at a later date the owner of the property might deed to the minister or to the trustees of the congregation the house and the plot of ground on which it rested.

The first Mennonite church building in Wood County was built of hewn logs and unlike some other Mennonite meetinghouses of the frontier, was never weatherboarded with sawed siding. Years after it had been built, the inside walls and ceiling were ceiled with clear poplar lumber. The seats and pulpit desk also were made of poplar. The building was torn down in the early eighties, in 1885, to be exact.[30]

Naturally the early services were conducted in German. During the Civil War when a number of English-speaking Mennonite ministers had left Virginia to escape service in the Confederate Army and this fact had been published in the *Herald of Truth,* several congregations availed themselves of the opportunity to invite one or more of the Virginia ministers to settle with them in order to have English preaching. In March, 1865, a certain "D. T." (Daniel or David Tyson?) wrote to the *Herald of Truth* from West Millgrove, Ohio: "I wish to write a few lines in regard to the 'Timely Hint' given in the January No. of the *Herald,* in relation to our dear Mennonite ministers who were driven out from their homes in Virginia, and those removing from their present homes to other places. We have here a small and weak congregation and should be very glad if some such one [that is, an English-speaking Virginia minister] would come among us and settle here, especially one who can speak both the English and German language. I think he could do a great deal of good in our church. Should anyone desire to find a home among us . . . write to Bro. Jacob Kaempher,

30 When Christian Risser died February 12, 1886, at the age of seventy-six, the funeral services were conducted by a Preacher Thompson. This indicates that Jacob Tyson, the last Mennonite minister, had already moved to Wayne County.

Fostoria, Seneca County, Ohio."[31] So far as the writer knows, no Virginia minister responded to this call and about eighteen years later English preaching caused a split in the congregation.

The ministers still remembered by surviving members of the congregation in 1931 were Jacob Kaempher, Henry Pletcher, Jacob Tyson, and Henry Tyson. Jacob Kaempher always preached German. He lived near Fostoria, a considerable distance, six or seven miles from the church. His wife was a member of the Winebrennerians (Church of God) and never came to services with him. Henry Pletcher could preach both in English and German.[32] Jacob Tyson, ordained after Henry Pletcher moved to Indiana, was the last minister and preached only German. He was an uncle of W. S. Tyson, who is still living in Wood County. Jacob Tyson moved to Wayne County and served as a minister in the Wisler Church there for a number of years.

George J. Tyson, now of Lemon Cove, California, who recalls events of about eighty years ago, states that the members of the Wood County church at that time, that is, in the early sixties, included the following: Henry Risser and wife, two members; Christian Risser, wife and family, five members; John Legrone family, four members; Henry Eichelbarger family, five members; Jacob Pletcher, wife and family, ten members; Abraham Boyer, wife and family, seven members; Daniel Tyson and family, including children and grandchildren, twenty-three members. In addition to the names given by George Tyson the following were almost certainly members of the congregation at that time: Jacob and Sarah Landis, and Isaac and Maria (Tyson) Hunsicker. This would make a congregation of sixty members.

George J. Tyson states that the Wood County congregation never had a resident bishop but that visiting bishops from the eastern

[31] *Herald of Truth,* II (March, 1865), 21. See also "A Timely Hint" in *Herald of Truth,* II (January, 1865), 6. For other references to this dispersal of Virginia ministers to Lancaster and Cumberland Counties in Pennsylvania and to Fairfield County, Ohio, see *Herald of Truth,* I (May, 1864), 12; "Our Brethren in Virginia," I (November, 1864), 71; I (November, 1864), 73; II (October, 1865), 82-3; and II (October, 1865), 87.

[32] Preacher Henry Pletcher and his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Risser, were the parents of Jeremiah (deceased); Mary Ann (deceased); Elizabeth, widow of Albert Culp; Jacob, in Wakarusa; Barbara (deceased, married Alpheus Yoder); Susan, (not married, deceased); John, (deceased); Israel (deceased); Magdalena, unmarried; Daniel, married Catherine Eberly, daughter of Preacher Levi Eberly of West Unity, Ohio, and still living north of Goshen, Indiana; Henry (deceased); and Martha (deceased).

part of Ohio conducted their communion services. The first one he remembers was Hoffot (sic), possibly Isaac Hoffer, of Williams County, but probably Henry Hufford, from Fairfield County. The next bishop he remembers was named Inhofe (sic), probably Peter Imhof, of Ashland County, who later moved to Wayne County and is buried in the Eight Square cemetery in Chester Township. The resident ministers he remembers were Jacob Kaempher, who always preached German; Henry Tyson, the deacon; Henry Pletcher, a minister mentioned above; and, after the latter was silenced (so says George Tyson), or at least after he moved to Elkhart County in 1882, Jacob Tyson, an ordained minister. This was only a few years before 1885 when the congregation dissolved and the church building was razed and moved away.

After Bishop Jacob Wisler and John F. Funk divided on Sunday schools and other progressive issues in Elkhart County, Indiana, in 1871 most of the Northern Ohio Mennonite churches followed Wisler and his Ohio adherent, Bishop Abraham Rohrer, of Medina County. Their group was called the Wislers; the other, the Funks. Then Henry Pletcher's English preaching became an issue. The congregation also took a stand against holding any evening services. In consequence of this action, all the Pletcher relatives left for Indiana. Preacher Henry Pletcher and his family followed in 1882. Besides Henry Pletcher and Samuel Pletcher, later of Middlebury, Indiana, some of the families of the sisters of the Pletcher brothers, also moved to Elkhart County. One of these sisters had married Bartley (Bartholomew) Risser.

After Henry Pletcher moved to Elkhart County, he became one of the ministers of the Yellow Creek congregation. He was violently opposed to the use of tobacco and had difficulty in working satisfactorily with the Elkhart County ministers. At the time when Pletcher was silenced, John F. Funk charged that he "talked too much," but after he was silenced, he continued his connection with the Mennonite Church for a time and donated the land on which the Salem Mennonite church now stands.

Jacob Tyson, who succeeded Henry Pletcher as a minister in Wood County, had married a daughter of Samuel Bloom.[33] Lovina

[33]Samuel Bloom (born February 2, 1819; died January 29, 1907) and Catherine, his wife (born September 12, 1821; died February 12, 1908) are buried in the Wood County Mennonite cemetery. They were among the last few remaining members of the Wood County Mennonite Church.

(Bloom) Tyson is still living (1943) with her daughter in Columbiana County. Even before Jacob Tyson's ordination to the ministry, the congregation became definitely Wisler. He was extremely strict with his children and unbending in his devotion to the German language and in his adherence to the ancient practices of the Mennonite Church. He soon moved to Wayne County near Orrville and labored with the Wisler church. His son, Jacob Tyson, is a preacher in Wayne County, Ohio, and is married to a Preacher Weaver's daughter. When one of the sons of the older Jacob Tyson did not turn out well, some of his relatives considered that the father's extreme disciplinary measures had helped to bring about the son's delinquency. Henry Tyson, son of the pioneer Daniel Tyson, was the last deacon in Wood County.

Although the Wood County congregation was still in existence so late as sixty years ago, the reasons for its final dissolution are not entirely clear. The reason usually given is the unhealthy climate, a series of serious epidemics and the wish of the members to improve their economic status. It is true, as already mentioned above, that the health of the community as a whole was not good. Every summer brought its malaria epidemics with the accompanying "shakes and ague." The "Black Swamp" had been covered with a dense growth of standing timber. On the floor of the forest were many old fallen trees that had been lying there for years. Since the country was so level that the water could not drain away, disease-breeding pools of water stood throughout the woods nearly all summer. In addition to malaria, there were also typhoid and kindred illnesses. Mosquitoes bred in swarms.

After the Civil War a sickness broke out in the vicinity of the Mennonite church. Several people died. The doctors could find no remedy to control the epidemic. When cold weather came the disease abated. During the next summer or autumn the epidemic began earlier and spread over a large section of the surrounding country. Many people died. The doctors were puzzled, and finally decided to call it "milk sickness." They advised their patients not to drink milk. But the epidemic continued to spread. When Elizabeth, the wife of Henry Risser, died in October, 1866, at the age of fifty-four, the doctors diagnosed her illness as dysentery. At last an aged Dunkard brother living in the neighborhood, who had been studying some doctor books said it was unnecessary to let all these people die because it was simply a bilious stomach ailment. When, late in the

fall, the neighbors told him to go ahead and doctor some of the sick, he took seven cases and cured them all.

The epidemic again stopped when cold weather set in but broke out with increased violence the next season. The Dunkard brother had some sixty cases to care for and of this number lost only two or three. The doctors, however, had no success in combatting the disease; scores of their patients died. When the doctors threatened to prosecute the Dunkard brother because he had no diploma, he said, "Very well, let us take it to court, compare notes and see who has killed the most people." After that he was not molested.

George Tyson, son of Isaac Tyson, the coffinmaker, remembers that he and an elder brother helped their father almost day and night making coffins. At that time many people spoke of leaving Wood County. But after the third season this particular epidemic ceased. From that time on sickness decreased as more and more of the land was cleared, roads were graded, and drainage ditches constructed.

Health conditions in the neighborhood certainly operated to contribute to the decline of the congregation. But there were other factors also. The membership of the congregation never had been large and many of the members of the church were related by ties of blood and marriage. This was one reason why several of the Tysons married into the Cupp family. Jacob Pletcher, however, who lived across the road from the meetinghouse, was so devoted to the German language that he would not permit any of his children to marry anyone who could not speak German. When the difficulty arose about English preaching and all the Pletchers and Rissers left the community or united with some other denomination, the feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction flamed up afresh.

Then too a number were not able to purchase land in Wood County at the increasingly high prices. A land agent who was selling Michigan real estate pictured northern Michigan as a veritable Canaan, with plenty of virgin timber, with cheap land well suited for growing potatoes and other crops, and with clear wholesome spring water. Dr. D. K. Boyer and John H. and George J. Tyson, sons of Isaac Henry Tyson, decided to go to northern Michigan to investigate. They left in October, 1883, and found the land very cheap, water good, and timber plentiful. The committee of three liked the location so well that they purchased eighty acres each. When they returned to Wood County, the relatives held a counsel

and a considerable number decided to move to Michigan. Those who had small holdings sacrificed their property, sold out immediately, and left for northern Michigan in the spring of 1884. Mrs. Susan Boyer, daughter of David Tyson, recalls that her father's health was poor, and whatever his sickness was, it caused a consuming thirst. She states that the water in Wood County contained considerable sulphur and David Tyson's physician advised him that if he moved to northern Michigan where there was plenty of fresh spring water, it would alleviate his suffering.

In the spring of 1884 the following families from the Wood County Mennonite neighborhood entrained at Bloomdale to move to Alanson, Michigan, near what is still known as the Maple River Mennonite Church: Isaac Tyson, Samuel and Catherine Bloom, Emanuel and Hannah Bloom, Samuel and Diana (Baker) Tyson, John and Dora (Cupp) Tyson, Isaac Henry and Rebecca (Cupp) Tyson, Dr. David K. and Susanna (Tyson) Boyer, Benjamin Legron, and George J. and Elizabeth (Boyer) Tyson. It was dark, in the early morning, when they set out for Bloomdale; the roads were extremely muddy and practically impassable. Although the roads had been surveyed according to the regular pattern of six square miles to the township, they were little more than winding trails through the timber. Wm. S. Tyson remembers walking ahead of the teams with a lighted lantern in order to enable the group to reach Bloomdale in time to board the Baltimore and Ohio train for Toledo. After the first group of Mennonites moved from Wood County to Michigan only eight members of the Wood County congregation were left. Then in one year two more left. The next year two more moved away so that only four members remained.

In the fall of 1884 after the first group had left, David K. Tyson sold his property at a sacrifice, dismantled his sawmill, loaded it on flat cars and shipped it to northern Michigan. Most of the good timber in Wood County had been sawed into lumber at that time, but timber in Michigan was plentiful. His son Wm. S. Tyson, then a boy of eighteen, and the latter's uncle, Samuel Cupp, drove two teams through with covered wagons from Wood County, Ohio, to Alanson, Michigan. They were on the way two weeks, camped out nights, and slept in the wagons. The great white pine trees in Michigan were so tall and stood so thick that Cupp and Tyson were obliged to look straight up to see the tops. For days they saw not a single house, nothing but the tall pine forests.

David K. Tyson set up his sawmill in northern Michigan and manufactured large quantities of lumber, but because transportation facilities were poor there was no market. The difficulty in the Maple River congregation over the matter of English preaching also added to the homesickness and discouragement. In addition, the winters were long and cold and there was a great deal of snow. During the first winter snow was four and one-half feet deep on the level and the temperature frequently dropped to thirty and forty degrees below zero.

Homesick and discouraged David K. Tyson sold his sawmill at Brutus after eighteen months, moved back to Wood County, purchased another sawmill of the circular saw type at Six Points, one mile west of Tysontown and two miles north of the Mennonite church, and continued his milling business. David K. and his wife Angelina (Cupp) Tyson were two of the last surviving members of the Wood County Mennonite congregation. The wife of George Tyson, son of Isaac Tyson, was one of those who became extremely homesick in Michigan, so much so that it injured her health. The sandy soil raised such meager crops that the most diligent toil won a bare subsistence. Gradually, one or more families at a time, the Boyers and a number of the Tysons moved to Elkhart County where many of their descendants still reside. The few who returned to Wood County and some who had remained there have prospered financially. One of the daughters of David Tyson, the trustee, married Erastus Chambers and remained in Wood County when the others moved away. This Chambers family never left Ohio and at her death, Mrs. Chambers left an eighty-acre farm to each of her five children. The Chambers cousins always point with pride to their fine farm crops when their Indiana relatives visit them.

Another element which added to the financial prosperity of the later Wood County residents was the discovery of oil. The boom was temporary, however, and most of the pipes were drawn from the wells a number of years ago.

As already stated, two of the last members of the congregation to retain their membership in the Mennonite Church were David K. and Angelina (Cupp) Tyson, who had moved to Michigan but returned to Wood County. In 1931 the writer visited at Tysontown[34] in Wood County the one surviving member of the congrega-

[34] Tysontown is the name given to a crossroads one-fourth mile west and two miles north of the church. Here lay the farms of Henry Tyson, the deacon, and Isaac Tyson,

tion, Mrs. Franie (Fannie or Veronica) Boyer, widow of Joseph Boyer, a cousin of Abraham Boyer. She was a daughter of the deacon, Henry Tyson. Joseph and Veronica Boyer's graves are among the most recent in the Perry Township cemetery. The church building was torn down in 1885 and the land, in accordance with the original terms of the deed, reverted to the successors of the grantors.

In the same year in which the church building was deeded to the congregation (March 17, 1856) by John and Fanny Legron, the cemetery lot also was deeded to the church trustees by Jacob and Elizabeth Pletcher. The date of this transfer was May 6, 1856. The cemetery, as stated above, is on the south side of the road and a short distance east from the former site of the church. The description of the cemetery lot in the deed is interesting. The description mentions that a certain line beginning at the road is to "run about forty-four rods to the foot of the hill then south along the foot of said hill thence along the base of the hill" . . . . To anyone who is not familiar with "hills" as known in such level country as the southeastern part of Wood County, this reference to a "hill" is confusing. Actually it is little more than a creek bank, the cemetery being bounded on the south and west by the South Branch of the Portage River.

On May 3, 1910, George Milner[35] and Lewis P. Risser, trustees of the "Mennonite Cemetery Association" deeded the cemetery to "the trustees of Perry Township." This is a wise provision made possible by the laws of the State of Ohio. It insures the preservation and upkeep of many a cemetery that otherwise would be neglected and in time forgotten. Here in a well-kept, rather artistic setting, "repose the last mortal remains of some of the hardy pioneers who conquered the Wood County wilderness and made it a thriving, prosperous community."

the coffinmaker. Henry Tyson's sawmill, shingle mill and cider press were located on the southeast and the farm of Isaac Tyson, on the southwest corner of the intersection.

[35] George Milner married Mary Risser, one of Henry Risser's daughters; hence Lewis P. Risser, a brother of Mary and Bartley Risser, was Milner's brother-in-law. Since it was a general custom among both Mennonites and Amish to bestow on a son as a middle initial the first letter of the mother's maiden name, Lewis P. Risser's mother's maiden name may have been Elizabeth Pletcher.

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

I. ON MENNONITE HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ON INDIVIDUALISM AND BROTHERHOOD

A Communication from Dr. Robert Friedmann

Beaver Dam, Wisconsin,
January 17, 1944.

Dr. Harold S. Bender, Editor,
Mennonite Quarterly Review
Goshen, Indiana

Dear Dr. Bender:

Your kind invitation in the editorial of the October, 1943, issue of the REVIEW to share in the discussion about C. Henry Smith's book, *The Story of the Mennonites,* gives me a welcome opportunity of reconsidering the major issue in Mennonite historiography; for, after all, this is the high point in the discussions, not the minor details about facts or individuals. The theme that is prompted by Dr. Smith's excellent history of Mennonitism and which urgently demands clarification, is the great question as to how to conceive of and appraise that great phenomenon of Mennonitism as it has developed through the ages. In stressing this basic concern your review by far surpasses the usual book reviews. Likewise, Dr. Smith's reply enters at some points into an almost philosophical discussion when he comes to consider the question of "how to write Mennonite history" (or, as one also could put it, "what matters in Mennonite history," or, "what is the true understanding, appreciation, and interpretation of this history?")

Such a discussion is something new. Older historians did not concern themselves too much with questions like that but merely put together the motley facts as they had become known in the course of research. In my opinion, Dr. Smith's book is a new departure, the first Mennonite history of the high quality that historians should possess in order to write history. If, nevertheless, the book shows shortcomings in some basic viewpoints, this must be taken as a sign that Mennonite historiography is also just now in a state of experimentation and transition, in which only the mutual flow of thoughts, a give and take, will lead to final formulations. I agree with you in this, that Mennonite history is not simply another history in which a sympathetic but academic objectivity is all that is required. Its very subject, as I understand it, is a religious concern of timeless actuality; consequently a relativistic objectivity by the author will not quite measure up to the essence of such a theme. Mennonitism, and still more Anabaptism, is a great challenge to the world; and more than sympathy is necessary to penetrate into its essentials which alone explain the course of all external happenings in that history. To me, this requires a certain religious understanding which, however, should not be confused with theological interpretations *per se.* It is rather an understanding for which German scholars have coined the almost untranslatable word *Geistesgeschichte,* a going back to the deeper

spiritual attitudes and dynamic motives for which the usual phrases, "history of ideas" or "intellectual history," are not quite adequate renderings. But even in *Geistesgeschichte* we should try to avoid a tendency which became the real worry of so many German scholars, namely a historical relativism which proves to be the real snare of all historiography.

This "geistesgeschichtliche" aspect was rightly stressed in your review as a desideratum of modern Mennonite historiography. It was your point, if I understood it rightly, that in spite of the great advance of Dr. Smith's book along this line it still remains a somewhat external depicting of happenings and individuals, lacking that final spiritual penetration which alone makes history (and in particular Mennonite history) meaningful. To this Dr. Smith answered from an angle which I can well understand though I do not share it. Dr. Smith says in effect, "Well, your proposition is excellent, but after all what can be offered in this line since so little has been known as yet about the underlying ideas, forces, motives. Research in Mennonite history has restricted itself hitherto almost exclusively to facts of all kinds, and there exists almost nothing to build upon in the line suggested. Without such preparation, however, all talk about *Geistesgeschichte* dissolves itself into vague speculations and mere confusion."

Is this true? Unfortunately I should say that it is, at least as far as American historiography of Mennonitism is concerned. It is true that your great efforts in the seventeen volumes of the MENNONITE QUARTERLY REVIEW converge more and more toward this great end of an inspired *Geistesgeschichte* of Mennonitism, but if you leaf through these volumes, how many articles could you credit to this program? Your manuscript on Conrad Grebel exhibits this new and intrinsic feature of interpretation, using those new categories (terminology) which such a viewpoint requires. But, alas your book is still not yet available to the public. The same could be said about my own "geistesgeschichtliche" endeavors. As you know, the manuscript of my book, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries,* is not yet in press, as it should be, and only a few chapters were printed in advance in the REVIEW. I also presume, by the way, that the manuscript of Dr. Smith's book was already finished when my first attempt in this interpretative field, the study on "Anabaptism and Pietism," appeared in 1940.

Still another argument might be advanced in favor of Dr. Smith's reply. *Geistesgeschichte* is based in the main upon the study or religious literature, including correspondence, public discussions, records of trials, and the like. Only material of this type reveals the inner motives and forces and the problems involved. You, of course, know all too well how little has been done so far in this line. It was not until very recently that we got a survey of the rich holdings of the Goshen College Mennonite Historical Library (collected for the most part in the last fifteen years), classifying what Mennonites after all understand as their spiritual heritage. The rich collections of letters and other handwritten material, however, which the church archives at the same place preserve, are still awaiting a complete inventory. Bethel College, finally, is still far from knowing what its holdings actually contain. Only the Scottdale Mennonite Historical Library has a catalogue (not complete and far from convenient). The same is true of the European collections as I know from my own experience. A history of Mennonite lit-

erature does not yet exist (except for some hints in the *Mennonitisches Lexikon*) since I would not call the mere enumeration of a series of titles a history of religious literature. Now that the treasures of the past are being made accessible in this country, one is entitled to hope that younger scholars will come along who will teach us to understand these records and to make them useful and fruitful for our present endeavors and struggles. You will remember that some time ago I suggested to you in some detail that, for instance, a study on van Braght's *Martyrs' Mirror* has long been due in the program of deeper Mennonite studies.

Summing up, I would say that your desideratum of a spiritual (or "spirited") historiography of Mennonitism is correct but will still have to remain so for quite a while. In addition, it should also be said in fairness that not all of Mennonite history is qualified for such a treatment and that there are many chapters which will always be written in the hitherto conventional way.

I cannot leave this subject without adding a few more remarks of a more bibliographical character. What do we actually possess in material of the aforementioned kind? As said above, there exists almost nothing on Anabaptist *Geistesgeschichte* in English. However, I should have mentioned the outstanding books by the leading Quaker philosopher Rufus M. Jones (*Spiritual Reformers of the Sixteenth Century* and *Studies in Mystical Religion*) in which at least the attempt was made with the scanty material at hand to bring the Anabaptist movement in line with the greater spiritual trends of Protestant Christianity. True, we cannot agree with Rufus Jones when he classifies Anabaptism as a kind of mystical religion, but upon closer study one feels that he did so only because of a lack of fitting English terms for the new phenomenon, just as his expression, "spiritual reformer," is but a makeshift for a related group of religious thinkers. What for instance was Hans Denck, the much discussed leader? Was he Anabaptist (L. Keller), Spiritual Reformer (Jones), mystic, or what else? Or was he all of these together, as were so many of the men in the 1520's when everything was still in the making?

More numerous and discriminating are some attempts of German scholars in Anabaptist *Geistesgeschichte*. First of all there is Troeltsch's great opus, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, to which every student of church history is indebted and to which he must refer, if he wants to appreciate this field. Although first published in Germany in 1912, this book was not translated into English until 1930. But however valuable this book may be, it has some qualities which restrict its wider application. First, Troeltsch is rather typical of that historical relativism which I have touched above as little suited in discussing actual Christian issues. Troeltsch himself was sorely aware of this shortcoming and wrestled with it again and again. And secondly, his famous distinction between "Kirche" (church as institution) and "Gemeinde" (church as sect type)—so fundamental in all his analysis—cannot find full response in a country where churches are not as institutionalized as in Europe so that the word "church" actually means both. (A distinction between *denomination* and *brotherhood* would be more appropriate in this country but is missing in the book.) In 1923 another German scholar, Johannes Kühn, presented a *Geistesgeschichte* of Protestantism of truly great value, advancing the interpretative classification of

Christian groups far beyond Troeltsch's simplified antithesis. His book, *Toleranz and Offenbarung,* in which he among other things pictures the Anabaptists most adequately as the *Nachfolge Christi* type, should be made available to the English speaking world and in particular to the student of Mennonite history. I cannot discuss his propositions in these brief remarks on historiography, but I did so in an article on the "Conception of the Anabaptists" (*Church History,* 1940). Next, I must mention W. Köhler's unsurpassed interpretation of the Zürich Anabaptists in the very important *Gedenkschrift,* 1925. It is a real gem, condensing all the main features into a few pages. One must regret that Köhler never continued this line of his study. Finally, I have to mention the most recent attempt of this sort by a German scholar, the really thought-provoking essay by Ethelbert Stauffer on "Täufertheologie und Märtyrertum" (*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte,* 1933), in which he traces the idea of a "suffering church" which became the very center of the Anabaptist message to the world, a point all too often overlooked or bagatellized. This article would deserve translation and presentation to the readers of the MENNONITE QUARTERLY REVIEW.

This is all that has been published in the line of *Geistesgeschichte* of Mennonitism so far as I know (minor remarks being omitted). You will notice that the little that exists deals only with the Anabaptism of the sixteenth century. Almost nothing is known which analyzes later developments of Mennonitism on both hemispheres up to the present in this manner. My own sketches on Mennonite literature of the eighteenth century cannot do more than merely indicate the wealth of fruit still to be harvested. The education of another generation of Mennonite scholars is required before this program can be fully achieved.

Now, allow me to turn to another item of the discussion between you and Dr. Smith, again of intrinsic significance and somewhat related to the first subject. It is a subject almost philosophical character yet all-important if one wishes to understand Mennonitism not only in its history but also in its present actualization. This is the problem of *individualism* as it has emerged in the pro and con of the discussion. In two preliminary points I agree with Dr. Smith, and I am sure that everybody will do so. First, that it all depends upon how one defines the term individualism, and secondly, that Mennonitism stresses (more than other Christian groups) the supreme importance of the decision of each individual in his own conscience. Mennonites as well as Anabaptists always formed only a "believers' church" (Max Weber), that is, a voluntary fellowship as compared with the state churches elsewhere in Europe. Whoever joined this church (*Gemeinde*) did so because of his personal and free resolution. No coercion whatsoever was exerted; in fact, Anabaptists were among the very first in modern history who practiced this liberty of conscience almost to the extreme and yet without making much ado about it. How could the church otherwise be kept a pure and aggressive body of earnest Christians? Yea, this attitude is even one of the great gifts of Anabaptism to the New World (Troeltsch) where churches more and more converge toward this ideal and the other one connected with it, namely democratic church government.

And yet, if this is all, why then are not all churches of the Anabaptist pattern? Apparently because this liberty of conscience is but a negative criterion; and because the alternative, "individualism-collectivism," sug-

gested by Dr. Smith in his answer, does not quite meet the real spiritual problem. Smith says in his answer, "The (Anabaptist) church was merely a fellowship of congenial and like-minded believers." The term "merely" betrays the unfinished character of Smith's analysis of this multiform phenomenon of the Christian church. After all, does not every church claim to be a fellowship of like-minded believers? What is then the specific character of the Anabaptist *Gemeinde* as compared with other denominations? You did not claim in your critique that Anabaptism stressed collectivism over against individualism, a statement which would even not be true with regard to the Hutterites who come the nearest to a collectivistic pattern of life. It is self-evident that in religious affairs the "we" can in no case replace the "I"; that goes without saying. And yet, there is a distinct difference between Anabaptism and those churches which likewise emphasize the *Gemeinde* principle, as, for instance, the Moravians do. I myself was much puzzled by this question when I had to distinguish Anabaptism from the Moravian movement, an apparently so similar and yet in its fundamentals so different phenomenon. I tried to answer this question as follows, being aware of the fragmentary character of such an answer. In the case of the Moravians as well as many other groups, there may exist a rather closely knit association or fraternity, yet it is not a real brotherhood as in the case of Anabaptism. Everybody still remains alone, seeking his personal salvation, and he only enjoys the sharing of edification with like-minded co-religionists. Or to put it in other words: the brother is not absolutely necessary for the salvation of the individual, which rests alone in the possession of one's faith. It is but one further step from this position to the liberal concept of individualism of the last hundred years, almost atomized society and destroyed church life at large. (NB. The modern concept of "church congregation" is an outgrowth of this situation. One has a neighbor in his pew, but one has no longer a "brother" in the sense of responsibility and sharing.)

Now then, the Central idea of Anabaptism, the real dynamite in the age of Reformation, as I see it, was this, that one cannot find salvation without caring for his brother, that this "brother" actually matters in the personal life. This is the teaching of Christ and of the Apostles (particularly of John). This interdependence of men gives life and salvation a new meaning. It is not "faith alone" which matters (for which faith no church organization would be needed) but it is brotherhood, this intimate caring for each other, as it was commanded to the disciples of Christ as the way to God's kingdom. That was the discovery which made Anabaptism so forceful and outstanding in all of church history. It is neither collectivism nor individualism (in the sense of independence), nor is it "mere" fellowship, that constitutes the Anabaptist *Gemeinden* as well as the later Mennonite groups. I would call it an *essential fellowship,* something which to a certain extent might be compared with family relations where the "I" and the "we" supplement each other. It is a group life, individual and free (as far as conscience is concerned), and yet of a kind of self-commitment which by far surpasses all sorts of pious co-devotion. And above all, it lets one forget this much advertised individualism, be it that of man's conscience or that of man's independence. In living with the brother, one does not care so much for this kind of freedom (from coercion by the group) which as a negative concept cannot be viewed as the final value of life.

Individualism can mean two different things: liberty of conscience (and in this sense it is accepted today by all religious groups even by the Roman Catholics to a certain extent—and is contradicted only by extreme collectivism as we experience it in our troublesome days—), or it means independence from one's neighbor, something which is erroneously so greatly overrated because it is the ideal of traditional liberalism. Between this individualism and the very different collectivism, we have to acknowledge several additional forms of living together, two of which might be relevant in the present context: fellowship as friendly co-operation, and brotherhood as a sacred concern for the brother by the true followers of Christ.

I must stop here, feeling that all these reflections are but hints and by no means complete. But let me say this at the end, looking back to our point of departure, Mennonite historiography. No written history can be or ought to be as objective as other sciences are supposed to be. It will be always the highest ideal of one's personal life which will determine the picture (or the vision) of history. If one is interested in that liberal individualism which made America great, then liberty of conscience might become a leading motive in that particular history whereby this individualism, as a matter of fact, does not contradict fellowship with like-minded people. If, on the other hand, one is intent on finding models of true Christian discipleship, a pattern so fundamentally different from all that Western history developed, then the history of the Christian church will show rather different features. In my eyes, Anabaptism as seen from this angle was and is still a tremendous challenge to the world and therefore should not be softened down by ideals more familiar to our present-day philosophy.

Sincerely yours,
Robert Friedmann

II. ON MENNONITE HISTORIOGRAPHY

A Communication from Dr. C. Henry Smith

Bluffton, Ohio
June 4, 1944.

Dr. H. S. Bender, Editor,
Mennonite Quarterly Review
Goshen, Indiana.

Dear Dr. Bender:

I am very much interested in Dr. Friedmann's commentary on the shortcomings of my *Story of the Mennonites*. As to just what those shortcomings are I am not quite sure, but borrowing some of Dr. Friedmann's own phraseology, and measuring by his own yardstick as to the qualifications of the perfect history, I presume some of the faults are about as follows: too much academic and relativistic objectivity, a lack of religious concern and understanding, too factual, too much reliance on mere sympathy only for the subject matter as an essential basis for understanding the true

spirit of Mennonitism, the lack of that final spiritual penetration which alone makes history meaningful, the lack of some intangible, indefinable something which the German historians call *Geistesgeschichte,* but which American historians have not yet been quite able to comprehend and for which there is no suitable word in English.

I am perfectly aware that a mere recital of the bare facts in the life of a people without properly correlating those facts, without an attempt at their interpretation and an explanation of their real significance, would give a mere skeleton of history without interest or meaning. Too much objectivity often leaves history dry and bare,—bones without meat. But I am wondering whether there is not equal danger of too much subjectivity, which, on the other hand, too often degenerates into mere personal opinion without sufficient basis of fact. After all you must base your interpretations of history on actual facts, and the larger your basis of fact, the more reliable your interpretation and opinion will be. We cannot belittle the importance of the bare facts of history which as often as not carry their own story, and need little interpretation from the narrator.

I am wondering whether this thing which the Germans call *Geistesgeschichte* is not after all a first cousin of our old American friend "Philosophy of History." When you enter that field you often leave real history behind and enter the realm of speculation, where you are tempted to think of facts not as they actually were, but rather as you think they should have been. Philosophers, like doctors, often disagree. The philosopher starts out with assumptions upon which he builds his philosophical structure; and each philosopher chooses his own assumptions. I have always been a bit suspicious of both the philosopher and the literary artist who turns historian. History is likely to be his second love. It is said of the English essayist and historian, Lord Macaulay, that in the writing of his well known history of England he was often more concerned with the balance of his sentences than with the accuracy of his facts. I am sure that Carl Sandburg, in his recent *Life of Lincoln,* puts a great many thoughts into the mind of Lincoln which the great emancipator never dreamed of.

What I mean is that *Geistesgeschichte* is often merely a particular interpretation of fact, and sometimes a distortion of fact, from a special point of view, and with a definite aim in mind. It is well known that practically all of the German historians of the last hundred years wrote their political histories from a decidedly nationalistic viewpoint, with results which unfortunately are only too evident to all of us today. Church histories were written from the state-church point of view. Anabaptists were heretics with no religious or civil rights and fit only to be annihilated. If modern writers like Koehler and Troeltsch now regard these earlier outlawed groups as pioneers of religious toleration and civil liberty, and centuries ahead of their day, it is not only because these historians have discovered new sources of information but rather because they have changed their original assumptions.

Like all other history, so Mennonite history may be written from other viewpoints, and with many objectives; special histories, religious, cultural, doctrinal, social, economic, general, aiming at a general view of the whole of Mennonite life and practices. There may be room even for a philosophical history, but for philosophers, not the average Mennonite reader.

Dr. Friedmann cites his own work, still in manuscript, on the history of Mennonite piety, as an example which I might have followed to advantage had it been printed at the time my *Story of the Mennonites* appeared. No doubt I would have benefited from it. But this history of Mennonite piety, too, is merely a particular, not a general history, covering only one very limited area of Mennonite life, the story of Mennonite piety, and nothing more, with subject matter treated as objectively as any subject matter in most of the more general histories which attempt to include a wider field of interests.

I am in no way unmindful, of course, of the excellent pioneer work Dr. Friedmann has done in his special studies in the field of Mennonite piety, and in the field of their devotional literature; but piety and devotional life does not constitute the whole of the story, even though it may play a very important role in it.

Undoubtedly the writer of general Mennonite history might very profitably leaven his story with a bit of all such spiritual and religious ingredients as characterized especially the life of the Mennonites. Such writing would reflect much more accurately the real tone of the Mennonitism of our forefathers than a mere recital of the bare facts of their activities. Future studies in the field of Mennonite piety and devotional literature, and other historians, will be glad no doubt to avail themselves of the findings of such and similar fields of research.

Since Mennonite historical libraries have been mentioned, may I suggest that perhaps Dr. Friedmann may not be as familiar with the contents of the Bluffton and Bethel libraries as he is with Goshen's. Each of these libraries specializes in fields of its particular interest. Scottdale has the largest and most complete collection of books, though not many manuscripts, in the field of early Anabaptist history, gathered together over a period of years by the late John Horsch, the pioneer Mennonite historian; Bethel excells in diaries, letters, and papers regarding the Russian Mennonites; Bluffton has the largest collection of source material on the early history of the General Conference, and the most complete collection of Oberholtzer manuscripts. As to other source material in the Bluffton library, soon after the first World War I secured copies of nearly all of the original documents found in the archives at Karlsruhe covering the Mennonites of South Germany. These copies made under the supervision of the chief archivist at the time, of course, are of the highest authenticity. At the same time I also secured copies of most of the important documents relating to the South German and early American Mennonites from the archives of the large Mennonite library in Amsterdam. These two lists containing hundreds of items, are undoubtedly the largest, if not the only list of its kind in America, and of great value especially to the student of early American Mennonite history. It was from this list largely, you remember, that you compiled many of your valuable Palatinate membership lists for the REVIEW some years ago. I also secured some time ago a complete set of the *Mennonitische Blaetter* from 1854 to 1940, another valuable source of Mennonite history of both America and Europe for the past one hundred years.

It has been our purpose to build up a worker's library, not an antiquarian's library and so we have not devoted much attention to the gathering of antiques and first editions. One edition of the Ausbund, any edition, will

furnish the historian as deep an insight into the devotional life and spiritual aspirations of the Swiss Brethren as the complete set of editions which differ only in the date and place of publication.

After having said all the above may I venture the suggestion that perhaps I have not quite sensed the drift of Dr. Friedmann's criticism of my book. Does he mean perhaps that I have not sufficiently tempered the narrative with the right amount of piety, simple religious faith, sincerity, ethical idealism, brotherly fellowship, sense of otherworldliness, or whatever it is that we call the spirit of Mennonitism so as accurately to reflect that spirit throughout the story, in other words to give it the proper atmosphere?

If that is what he means, then may I ask two other questions? Can we agree on the content of the term "spirit of Mennonitism"? Then, granted that we can locate and capture this spirit, by what literary technique or artistry can it be best expressed in a general history so as to give the whole narrative the proper Mennonite tone?

The most effective technique, undoubtedly, would be to intersperse throughout the whole story as much as possible of the actual speeches and expressions of the leaders of the movement. In other words let them tell their own story. And that is exactly what Dr. Koehler did in the *Gedenkschrift* in what Dr. Friedmann calls "a real gem, condensing all the main features in a few pages." And that is all he did, quoting largely from two well known sources, known to all the writers of early Anabaptist history—one primary, the other secondary, Egli's *Aktensammlung* and Cornelius' *Geschichte des Münsterschen Aufruhrs.*

But it must be remembered that Dr. Koehler in the article above mentioned is describing only one brief incident, involving only a small group of men in their activities, covering a period of time of less than one year. It is easy to tell this brief and simple story through the mouths of the actors themselves; but quite different is it to tell the life history of a whole people over a period of four hundred years scattered all over the world. That sort of a story must be told in the words of the historian himself, in language that not only tells all the facts, but reflects at the same time what the historian regards as the real character of the inner life and the essence of the spirit of the people he writes about.

In the meantime future Mennonite historians will continue to write the history of their people, a history more perfect no doubt than the first pioneer efforts: all kinds of history, from a variety of view points, with many final objectives and for many different reading publics—regional histories, histories of different branches, histories of persecutions and migrations, doctrinal histories, literary histories, cultural and philosophical histories, and insofar as Mennonite ideals have changed with the centuries, histories of the changing essence of Mennonitism. But as to the perfect general Mennonite history as visualized by Dr. Friedmann, covering the whole of Mennonite life and experience, religious and social, reflecting justly and accurately the proper spirit and real essence of Mennonitism through the changing centuries, impartial to all shades of belief, and satisfactory to all of the twenty odd American divisions into which the denomination is divided—that history will never be written.

Sincerely yours,
C. Henry Smith